Appalachian Quilting by Georgia Bonesteel

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES • EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Vol. 24 No. 2 $8.00

FABRIC *of* APPALACHIA

Appalachia's Renaissance Man *by* Grace Marshall

Chest-Messaging in the Coalfields *by* Marat Moore

Still Sewing the Fabric of Appalachia *by* Nancy Jane Earnest

A New Face in the Fields: Alpacas in Appalachia *by* Michael Joslin

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NOW

"I own the wig depicted in *Hedwig* and know snippets of its complete history. It passed through at least three sets of hands on its way to me and now plays a new role in my life. I occasionally wear it while teaching to wake up a sleepy class; but it also reminds me of my grandmother, whose own grey locks would be bound up in curlers in a weekly ritual. *Hedwig*—like much of my work—is about the intersection of these various stories, linking past and present."

Jeana Eve Klein is an assistant professor and fibers area coordinator in the art department at Appalachian State University.

Hedwig, 40" x 25", 2007. Dye, acrylic paint and spray paint on cotton and recycled fabrics; layers of surface design processes, machine pieced, hand-quilted with French knots.

THEN

Tennessee brothers Larkin and Finley Curtis enlisted in the Army of the Confederate States of America. Their mother divided the hand-woven coverlet pictured here into halves and then embroidered each son's initials on his half.

Ruth Curtis Collection, Reece Museum, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Coverlet, approximately 94" x 36", pre-Civil War.

On the cover: *My Mountains*, 28" x 29", by Virginia Kennedy. Voted best quilt of Tennessee imagery at *Mountain Messages IV: From These Hills*, June-August 2008, Reece Museum, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.

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By August 31, 2009

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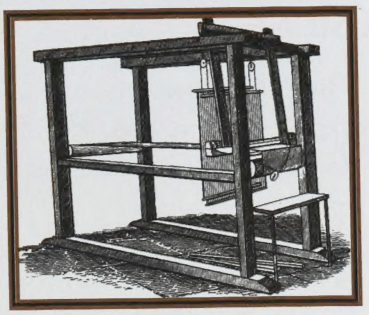
A MEDITATION ON FABRIC

By Roberta Herrin
Center for Appalachian Studies and Services Director



During the 1989 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the American Cotton Growers launched an advertising campaign that has become a cultural classic: "Cotton, the fabric of our lives." It is small wonder that this slogan has flourished for twenty years because it turns on a powerful metaphor—our lives as fabric, constructed of warp and weft. Pattern and weave. Selvage and fringe. Bias and grain.

Fabric is intimate. It swaddles, warms, comforts. Covers and protects. Compensates and disguises. Defines and announces. Fabric is at the heart of the stories of our lives—baby blankets, prom dresses, wedding dresses, shrouds. At the end, our lives stand on these stories.

Swinging on the barn gate, waiting for the "feed man" to deliver chop for the cow and pigs, eager to see the sacks, hoping for a feed sack to match one already washed, ironed, and folded in the pantry. One feed sack can make a child's dress or an apron, with scraps left over for quilt pieces. Two or three or four of the same pattern can make curtains or a tablecloth or a dress for a full-grown woman.

Walking through Waechter's Silk Shop in Asheville, North Carolina, absorbing the smells of wool and dye and sizing, fondling the sturdy linens draped from the bolts, caressing the elegant silks, noting their "hand." A Simplicity or a Butterick pattern? Three yards or four? The high cost of a miscut. The embarrassment of a mismatched stripe.

The negligible importance of it all. The trifling seriousness with which we robe our bodies and adorn our homes as though the covering were all, forgetting what Henry David Thoreau taught us in *Walden*: "I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes." Later in the same essay, he points out, "The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive age imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature."

Thoreau believed our lives should be birthed through our intercourse with nature, that nature be the fabric of culture. Is it possible that nature is the primary fabric of Appalachian culture? Ross Spears' four-part documentary *Appalachia: A History of Mountains and People*, which will be aired on PBS in 2009, interprets the region's culture through its prehistory and geology, relating the environmental history of the region and emphasizing the closeness to nature of its earliest inhabitants. According to Jamie Ross, "The environment is a character, not just a background."

The phrase "cultural fabric" includes much more than nature, however, especially when it describes regions. It suggests that spools of ethnicity, art, music, religion, and activism reel off diverse and colorful threads that together weave our culture, just as surely as diverse and colorful

threads make the clothes on our backs, the cloths on our tables, the flags of our nations.

But "cultural fabric" also connotes more than the superficial warp and weft of nationality and class and privilege and conspicuous consumption. Appalachia's cultural fabric is built from the stories of Thoreau's "sojourners" who live by values that transform them into "new wearers of clothes." The transformation is usually the consequence of life-changing decisions, such as truth-telling, civil disobedience, or activism. I think of Denise Giardina's gift of words, of Bill Best's crusade to preserve heirloom seeds, of Helen Lewis' commitment to community, of Jeff Mann's willingness to tell his personal story, of Jack Spadaro's stand on mountaintop removal.

Feed sack or silk, the fabric is immaterial. The story is all. Rip out the weak stitch and sew a stronger seam. Cut across the grain. Embrace the ragged edge. ❖

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By Fred Sauceman

Easter hats purchased out of a Sears-Roebuck catalogue. Wool dyed with sumac and dandelion root. Broadcloth. Yarn the color of daffodils. The canvas floor of a boxing ring in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, of the 1950s. A carpenter's overalls with a yellow pencil in the pocket. Bedspread Boulevard in north Georgia: Spear and Circle, Wild Rose, Daisy, Acorn, and Doughnut the patterns in chenille. Dungarees, full-cut blue jeans—Pointer brand, made in Bristol, Tennessee, since 1913. Orange prison garb. Camouflage T-shirts promoting solidarity during a United Mine Workers of America strike in the southwest Virginia coalfields. A flyer's vest from World War II. Socks and scarves made of alpaca fiber for a new day.

Such is the fabric of Appalachia, the theme for this issue of *Now & Then.* ❖

Editor's Note: We are altering our submission deadline date for the 2009 *Appalachian Foodways* spring/summer issue. At the very latest, submissions for that issue need to be in hand by February 15, 2009. We will also be shipping the *Foodways* issue earlier (June rather than July).

RECKONING

"Did you ever think, child, how much piecin' a quilt's like livin' a life?. . . . You see, you start out with jest so much caliker. You don't go to the store an pick it out and buy it, but the neighbors will give you a piece here and a piece there, and you'll have a piece left every time you cut out a dress, and you take jest what happens to come. And that's like predestination. But when it comes to the cuttin' out, why, you're free to choose your own patterns. You can give the same kind o' pieces to two persons, and one'll make a "nine-patch" and one'll make a "wild-goose chase," and there'll be two quilts made out o' the same kind o' pieces, and jest as different as can be. And that is jest the way with livin'. The Lord sends us the pieces, but we can cut 'em out and put 'em together pretty much to suit ourselves, and there's a heap more in the cuttin' out and the sewin' than there is in the caliker."

Eliza (Aunt Jane) Calvert Hall, Kentucky, 1899

Note:
Eliza Calvert Hall, whose real name was Eliza Calvert Obenchain, wrote a series of short quilting stories that were compiled in 1907 in *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*. As president of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association, a suffragette movement, she fought in particular for a woman's right to make her own will.

Using Story As Metaphor, Legacy, and Therapy, Jeanne R. Williams, MS, *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 17(1), March 1995. ©1995 Human Sciences Press, Inc.

STILL SEWING THE FABRIC OF APPALACHIA

By Nancy Jane Earnest

Denim is the fabric of Appalachia. Just ask Jack King, fourth-generation owner of L.C. King Manufacturing Company, maker of Pointer Brand jeans and overalls. A small company, and one of the last sewing factories in America, L.C. King has been doing business through thick and thin on the same corner of 7th and Shelby streets in Bristol, Tennessee, since its founding by Jack's great-grandfather, L.C. King, in 1913.

Three King brothers, L.C. (sewing), H.P. (department store), and E.W. (dry goods wholesaler) established their companies in 1913 on their own respective corners of 7th and Shelby with the intention of promoting each other's businesses as well as their own. While King has been a well-known name in regional business through the years, L.C. King Manufacturing is the only original company still producing at the same location.

There's no fancy storefront; no neon sign. A small logo on the window tells you where you are. Step inside the cavernous office and you'll see five or six people at computers behind the high front counter. Jack King shares the space with everyone else. Marinda Holt, plant manager and twenty-one-year veteran of the company, smiles broadly as she approaches the front. A tour of the plant begins.

We reach the heart of operations, the original front office space, through a circuitous route out the back of the upstairs office. It is here where Marinda inputs all the information to produce computer-generated patterns. It's quite an improvement from the days she spent hand-marking patterns with chalk. Jack arrives on the scene, praising Marinda. "She's excellent," he grins. "She has a fabric utilization of ninety-two percent. We only lose eight percent yield. She knows patterns inside and out."

L.C. King sells throughout the United States via its website and in small department stores in downtown areas—"the traditional men's store where a man would go in to buy his suits, underwear, work wear. There are plenty of them still around," Jack said. "We have six or seven outlets in the immediate area, including farm and feed stores." A few styles are also exported to Japan. "Worldwide, all denim fashion starts in Japan, then migrates to the United States, then goes to Europe," Jack explains.

Linda Watson sets the fly on a pair of jeans. Photo courtesy Nancy Jane Earnest.

"Dungarees and full-cut jeans are fashion items in Japan. They like our stiff denim."

When L.C. King opened for business, the primary products were jeans, overalls, and work wear. "We were sewing for the farmer, the manual laborer," Jack said. "Our clothes were full cut—big in the legs and the seat. The open-back overalls have always been the best seller. They keep farmers cool in the summer." And the Pointer Brand line has remained pretty simple through the generations. Pointer is not a fashion brand. It's a work wear brand, and the company has been making the same garments day in and day out, year after year. However, King picked up production of military uniforms during World War I and sewed for the Navy in World War II. When men came home from the war, business boomed.

The company was strong in the 1950s and '60s under the leadership of L.C.'s four sons. In the '70s, the popularity of hunting apparel started growing, and L.C. King became Bass Pro Shops' number-one hunting apparel supplier. In the '80s the company was sewing WearGuard work clothing.

. . . .and L.C. King became Bass Pro Shops' number-one hunting apparel supplier.

Then came the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, which eliminated tariffs or custom surcharges on manufactured items crossing the U.S. border from Mexico and Canada. "So that took all the Bass Pro Shops and WearGuard business away from us literally overnight," Jack recalled. "It all went to Mexico. Since then, it has left Mexico and gone to China and India. We even get Mexican sewing plants calling us looking for business," Jack explained.

"We now have thirty-three employees. When I arrived before NAFTA we had 130. It's just been tough. The year 1998 was when we really started feeling it. But the employees hang with me. We have twenty-seven sewers. Two mechanics are on staff all day long. This used to be a huge sewing region, but lots of jobs have been taken offshore.

"It hasn't been the easiest row to hoe here at L.C. King Manufacturing," he admitted. "On top of NAFTA, we lost our denim supplier. The supplier that we had been with for over thirty years literally stopped business completely overnight. We were finally able to find a new one. Now we use Liberty Denim in Liberty, South Carolina.

"We were stagnant for a few years when we lost our supplier, but our customers are slowly coming back to us now. It's been about a year. We now have all our supplies in and have shipped all our orders complete," he grinned. "Our denim arrives in 500-yard rolls, sixty inches wide, and weighing in at 650 pounds each, straight from the manufacturing floor to our sewers."

In the cutting room, twenty-four layers of denim are scored at one time with a piece of machinery resembling a band saw. From there it takes forty-three separate operations to construct a pair of overalls, and L.C. King can produce 1,200 pair a week. While the company uses high-tech machinery for some of these steps, real people are right there operating the machinery. They take pride in their work and their company. They are like family.

With no guarantee of continued growth in the current economy, what is L.C. King Manufacturing doing to stay in the game?

"We're in a fantastic position because we own our building and our equipment," Jack explained. "The building is 55,000 square feet. We're not a big company, but we're growing this year. Why? Because we stay focused on our customers," he emphasized. "People are most surprised about how friendly we are to our customers. That's how we put our marketing dollar into our product: We love up on our customer. We don't care what size our customer is; we care that our customer has something to wear. We make up to a size seventy, and even did a size ninety-two for a man in Vidalia, Georgia.

"If our pattern needs to be modified for someone with special needs, we do it. We have a customer with braces on his legs, and we make the jeans legs larger. We have a woodworker in Dalton, Georgia, who is particular about the pencil holder in his overalls. So once a year we make him eight pair of overalls with the wider pencil holder.

"United Auto Workers provides their women employees with five pair of jeans per year. The jeans we make for them are not real full, but they let a lady work in comfort and look nice, too," Jack explained. "And not look like a guy," Marinda added.

That personal touch keeps customers coming back. Even though L.C. King Manufacturing Company has faced uncertain times, it has come out on top by sheer determination and hard work. With strong ties to its past, the company continues to move toward its future, producing the well-designed, hand-made denim garments that will withstand the sweat of honest labor. The fabric of Appalachia is tough, just like its people. ❖

Eula Greenwell sews overalls. Photo courtesy Nancy Jane Earnest.

Nancy Jane Earnest is an artist, musician, and writer whose work has appeared in *Now and Then* and the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* as well as local and regional publications *News and Neighbor, Western North Carolina Woman,* and *Voice Magazine for Women*.

STIR WITH A KNIFE

By Rosanne Griffeth

The child huddled closer to his mother when the woman threw open the doors of Timman's store, letting the rain blow in. He'd been a good child and his momma had bought him a Payday candy bar. He grasped it like he was afraid the woman on the threshold would take it.

The child's mother picked up a knife and stirred her coffee, averting her eyes from the newcomer. No one said hello.

The woman's one good eye swiveled on the farmers and folk in the store while her bad eye rolled around at nothing in particular. She did something that might have been a smile or a grimace. There was dreadful scarring visible above the knitted scarf she wore around her neck.

No one said a word.

She moved around the store, her left foot dragging. One of her shoes had a heel two inches taller than the other. The rain still blew in the front door, but no one said anything or moved to close it.

She brought her purchases to the counter—a packet of No. 7 sharps, several spools of Coats white cotton thread, and a thimble. Timman rang her up and took her money. Her bad eye wandered around looking at no one. A few people made surreptitious hand signs.

She wrapped her purchases, put them in her tapestry bag, and hobbled to the door. She turned and looked back, focusing her good eye on the young mother. She made that thing with her face again. Could have been a smile—could have been a grimace. She giggled, making a sound like a crow eating poisoned corn.

"Stir with a knife—trouble and strife." Her voice croaked with the sound of a rusty gate latch.

The young mother startled and pulled the child to her. The woman left, leaving the door flapping behind her.

Timman walked from behind the counter, wiping his hands on his apron. He shut the door behind the woman and looked at his customers.

Illustration by Randy Sanders.

The young mother whispered, "What do you suppose she meant?"

"Don't you worry none, Lucille," said one of the farmers. "All that stuff you hear 'bout that crazy old bat cain't be true."

A teenager said, "My momma said she got like that when the rats tried to eat her face whilst she were sleepin'."

Timman snorted and said, "Nah, she got caught in a barn fire. Ain't been right since."

Lester, whose farm was just up the road, said, "She sure do sew pretty, though. Heard she sold one of them baby quilts for fifty dollar to some outsiders."

The teen said, "My momma said them people, their baby died after they got that quilt. She says she sews hate into them blankets. Says she wouldn't have one of them in the house for love or money."

The young mother said again, "But what did she mean—trouble an' strife? She was looking right at me."

Lester laughed, "How can you tell? I sure can't tell what she's lookin' at!"

"The evil eye . . . that's what she's got," said another.

"Pshaw!" Timmon said, wiping down the counter. "Ain't no such thing. It's just something she's always a'muttering."

A boy scuffed his boot in the sawdust covering the floor. "Well, I heared that she keeps a big ole quilt that she never finishes. Every square got a hex on somebody on it. She sews a body's name on it and then you die."

"My mamaw said she drownded her baby in the creek and then ate it!" said the boy's companion, in a fit of one-upmanship. The boy looked peeved, since he would have liked to reveal this detail. Some of the patrons nodded, having heard this before.

"Awright, now! That's enough!" Timmon said. "She's just an old woman. Don't you boys got chores to do? Get on out of here, you're takin' up air!"

The boys filed out into the rain, unhappy to leave the gossip in the warm store.

Later that night, the woman stitched another square onto an impossibly huge quilt stretching over the quilt frame and spilling onto the floor. Her deft needlework embroidered a name into the details of a hand-sewn quilt block.

"Yes, indeedy. Stir with a knife—trouble and strife." ❖

Rosanne Griffeth lives in Cocke County, Tennessee, a few miles from the factual setting of Catherine Marshall's *Christy*.

THE GREAT BANDANA PORCH SIT

By Elizabeth Hunter

For the past five years my neighbors and I have gotten together one night a week to talk about what life was like in the Bandana community back when they were children (and before that, based on stories they heard from parents and grandparents). Though my own memory of this place goes back only to 1976, when I moved into the Marsh Putman place, the collective memory of the participants in what I call "The Bandana Project" goes back to people who fought on both sides of the Civil War. (At least one man from this wide place in the road in western North Carolina fought first for the South and, late in the war, switched sides, allowing him to draw a Union pension for the rest of his life. This did not sit well with many of his neighbors.) A few who come to our meetings are, like me, "from off." But most were born and raised and still live here, though a few who now live up toward Boone or down toward Asheville have attended more or less regularly for years.

Our meetings have always begun after the holidays and stop at the end of March; this year there were suggestions that we keep meeting through the summer, maybe once a month. I knew everyone would get busy, though, what with gardens to tend, family reunions and church decorations and the like, and I didn't want the Bandana Project to lose the steam we've maintained despite the deaths of many of the group's original members. Eighteen people crowded into my neighbor Helen's living room for our final 2008 meeting. We began with far fewer people than that. But over the years, as some of our original members have crossed the Great Divide, their children or spouses have taken their places. Bert, who never came while her husband Sherwin was alive, became a regular in 2008. And Ruby's daughter Joan and son Gerald—and their respective spouses—have been BP regulars for two or three years.

Because I'd been the one to nix the idea of continuing to meet, I thought I ought to come up with something to bring us together at least once during the summer. In bed one night, I remembered the very first summer I spent in the Appalachian South, in a West Virginia backwater called Kiah's Creek, whose residents, I believe, were later driven from their land by a flood control project. I'd spent the summer of 1966 as an Appalachian Volunteer, living with Walter and Sadie Queen, whose children drove in, more weekends than not, from Chicago, where they,

Meg Peterson (left) and the author (right) on the porch at Junior and Brenda's house. Photo courtesy Sarah McKee.

like most young people from that community, had had to go to find work. Evenings on Kiah's Creek, when the dishes were done, Sadie and I joined Walter and whatever neighbors stopped by in the row of straightback chairs on the front porch. As the crickets and katydids and tree frogs tuned up the evening orchestra, we watched dusky dark fade to night and the fireflies rise from the field. It took an hour to drive the eight miles from Kiah's Creek to Wayne, the nearest town and county seat. In places, you drove in the creek, its sandy bottom being less treacherous than the rocky right-of-way. Little traffic passed the Queen place; Walter and Sadie recognized who was coming even before the headlights poked into the holler. By summer's end, so did I.

Why not, in that grand tradition, hold a Great Bandana Porch Sit this summer? I called Helen. She loved the idea.

"We need a house with a long porch."

"Let's have a watermelon seed-spitting contest over the porch rail," she said.

Then we all got busy and mostly forgot the idea until one day when Junior pulled up next to me while I was taking my daily walk. He's a BP regular, but I hadn't seen him in weeks. While we were talking, I remembered Helen saying that Junior and Brenda had the right kind of porch.

"When are we going to have the Great Bandana Porch Sit?" I asked him.

"What?"

I told him about our idea, and he got all fired up. Sure, have it at his house. He'd grill hamburgers and chicken. Everybody else could bring a dish. "I'll call Helen soon's I get home." He gunned his pickup and drove off.

The next thing I knew, Helen had called everybody and picked a date. Which is how it happened that late one July afternoon, my neighbor Meg and I found ourselves walking to Brenda and Junior's. I had suggested, in the spirit of Bandana past—with which, after five years of BP meetings I felt pretty well acquainted—that we wear long dresses and straw hats, walk and carry our food in baskets over our arms. Of course, nobody else walked, or dressed the way the women once did. And although it was definitely on the warm side, we turned down every offer of a ride, of which we got several from others headed for the event. It was beautiful to walk the winding road through the community and up the long hill to Junior and Brenda's, which is where people build houses in Bandana now, though not often in the straw-hat era.

Meg and I each brought one dish, but many people brought multiples. There was so much food that, while there was watermelon, the spitting contest never occurred because everyone was too stuffed after eating a plate of burgers, chicken, potato salad, squash casserole, green beans, baked beans, sliced tomatoes and pickles, and another plate of stack cake, banana pudding, Meg's berry tart, strawberry shortcake, and a half dozen other desserts, to have room for the watermelon you needed to eat to get to the seeds.

They'd spread tablecloths and set out vases of flowers on each one.

We sat at long tables that Helen and Brenda had set up on the porch that runs down two sides of the house. They'd spread tablecloths and set out vases of flowers on each one. All the current BP regulars showed up, as well as former regulars we hadn't seen in awhile because they'd had knee operations, or lived an hour away and didn't like to drive home at night. The person from farthest away was a woman who grew up in Bandana but lives in Texas, where she retired a year or two ago from a teaching job at Baylor. A few years back she bought out the other heirs and fixed up a family homeplace in our community. Every summer she comes home for a few weeks. This year her eleven-year-old grandson accompanied her.

Her brother Pat, who now lives in Spruce Pine, a half hour from Bandana, is someone who Helen and I wish would come to all our meetings, although we have only been able to lure him to a

few. Pat's head is a vast library of Bandana stories. Nobody tells a story better than Pat. And there he was at the porch sit, with his wife. So after we'd finished eating, we begged him to tell a few tales and were surprised that he complied, since he's a little shy sometimes and there must have been forty people there. The universal favorites among the stories he knows are the Rass tales, though he eased into them by way of the three terrific Burge Turner tales that only Pat, who is an excellent mimic, can tell.

There'd been dozens of conversations going on while we were eating, but as soon as he started in, everyone hushed and gathered round. "Tell a Rass tale," someone inevitably said. I never met Rass but sure wish I had, because everybody else remembers him and his wife Hurtha, who could finish his stories for him minus the fine embroidery when the evening got late. Rass's stories concerned acts of derring-do performed by himself when he was off working construction in places like New York City and Texas. Helen's son Norb says that when Rass was old he liked helping in the fields come haying time. By then he couldn't walk very well, so he rode at the back of the baler, stacking bales on the wagon. Whoever worked with him had to catch three bales to Rass's one, but Norb always volunteered "just to listen to Rass talk."

"The best neighbor that ever was" is pretty much the universal assessment, despite his proclivity for stretching the truth. For instance, there's the story about the helper he shoved off the two-by-four that they were suspended on (and it narrow side up) forty stories above the ground, and then, as the man fell, Rass thought the better of it and lassoed him before he was halfway to the ground. But the best one, in my opinion, is about a trip Rass made on a brand-new Indian motorcycle he bought when he was working up in Hazard, Kentucky, and rode back to Bandana one Friday evening.

"Now Rass had on a new blue serge suit," Pat said. "Going round those curves in the mountains, he laid that motorcycle down so low that it wore his shoe leather away. And that wind was blowing so hard, fast as he was going, that about the time he got to Gate City, Virginia, he looked down and saw that a little thread was working its way loose at the bottom of one sleeve. Next thing he knew, the whole sleeve was gone. The other sleeve went the way of the first, then the whole jacket, and by the time he got to Johnson City, Tennessee, he always said, all he had left on was his shorts." ❖

Elizabeth Hunter is a freelance writer living in the Bandana Community in Mitchell County, North Carolina. A contributing editor and columnist for *Blue Ridge Country* magazine, she is volunteer writing teacher at a medium security prison. In 2004, she and her neighbors initiated weekly winter meetings to share stories about life in Bandana since the 1920s.

DEEP ROOTS AND MOUNTAIN SPIRIT

By Judy Lee Green

My mama, ten years old, was playing paper dolls in a dry creek bed the first time she laid eyes on my daddy. Four years later, after finishing the eighth grade, my mama was married to my daddy in the middle of the night by a barefoot preacher who got out of bed and put his pants on but never bothered with his shoes. His wife, her hair in curlers, threw a robe over her nightgown, sat down in a rocker, and crocheted while she moaned and cried throughout the ceremony, "You'll be sorry. Oh, child, you'll be sorry."

By the age of twenty-one my mama had given birth to five little babies, stair steps, just months apart. We were the baby dolls in the window of the five and ten cent store that her sharecropper daddy could never afford. Delighted with us, she dressed us up and changed our clothes, counted our fingers and kissed our toes, played patty-cake and peep-eye, and danced us on her hips as she sang along with the Carter Family, and yodeled with Rose Maddox and Patsy Montana on the radio.

My daddy was a carpenter with a fifth-grade education. He was taken out of school as a child to help support the family. Even without formal education, though, Daddy could build an entire house by himself, from the foundation to the finish work. He could frame and put up sheetrock, do the electrical and the plumbing, hang doors, set windows, roof, brick, and paint. In his carpenter overalls and brogan shoes, my daddy climbed over houses under construction like an acrobat in leotards and ballet slippers. He could walk across the ridge beam of a roof carrying a two-by-four as easily as a tightrope walker in a Barnum and Bailey Circus.

A master carpenter, my daddy was also a shade tree mechanic and could change the oil or rebuild the engine in a car. He was twenty-one years old when he married my mama. His daddy, also a carpenter, distilled bootleg whiskey to make ends meet for his family of ten when times were hard.

My mother's father (my granddaddy) was born in the Blue Ridge Mountains near the Georgia-North Carolina line in the late 1800s. He was one of several children born to a young Cherokee Indian woman (my great-grandmother). Her family hid in North Carolina caves during the

One hundred-plus years ago, the author's ancestors posed in front of their log cabin. Photo courtesy author.

Trail of Tears to escape the forced removal of all Native American tribes east of the Mississippi River to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. According to family legend, she married a mean old white man (my great-granddaddy).

My granddaddy attended grammar school for a short period of time, after harvest and before planting, but was needed to plow, pick cotton, chop wood, do chores, and work in the field to help his sharecropper parents. When he had learned the alphabet and could cipher, which was more than most folks knew, additional schooling was not necessary.

My maternal grandmother first saw smoke and light in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains, where her ancestors had settled after traveling the Wilderness Road from North Carolina and Virginia to make a new home in Tennessee country. Under a shroud of mist, or blue smoke, her family hunted wildlife in virgin woods, fished in unpolluted trout streams, and gardened in fertile coves and rich valleys many years before talk of a national park.

After years of financial, political, and cultural issues were eventually resolved, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was dedicated in 1940. My grandmother, however, did not live to see this phenomenal achievement. She bled to death on a straw tick in 1934, bequeathing my mother, her youngest daughter, seven years old at the time, with nothing material, but with a powerful innate spiritual connection to the sacred blue mist mountains of her heritage.

My granddaddy never owned a car or learned to drive, never did anything other than farm for halves. He never owned a home or lived in a house with an indoor bathroom or running water, never had a telephone, always heated his house and cooked his food with wood. He had a mule but would not plow or ride it to church on Sunday. "Even a poor mule deserves a day of rest," he said. A bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling in each room of the tenant house he shared with my great aunt and uncle was his only modern convenience.

When I was a little girl, my granddaddy corresponded with my mama, his youngest daughter, from the isolated Georgia farm where he lived and worked for shares. Letter-writing was their only means of communication. He carried a yellow pencil in the bib of his overalls, his Barlow knife in his left front pocket, jingling money in his right, if he was fortunate enough to have a few coins. He sharpened his pencil, moistened the tip on his tongue, and, using no capitals or punctuation, wrote in a dull, scratchy scrawl on a lined six-by-nine-inch dime-store tablet:

wnt 2 twn tuther day
got nu ovrals
an poke uf fuge
whn r u cumn dwn
u kok gud food 4 ed
4 he wrks hrd
u r stl mi ba b

i b cn u

luv dady

Though my granddaddy could read and write a little, he misspelled the names of two of his three daughters in the family Bible. The birth of my Aunt Ivy was recorded as *I V*. The first name of my Aunt Essell was spelled *S L*.

My mama often misspelled the names of us children on the back of photographs. Though she wrote a pretty hand, correct grammar and spelling did not concern her. Like my mother, other females in my family always quit school to get married. By the time I grew up, three or four male cousins had graduated from high school but no one went to college. My oldest brother was smart and wanted to go, but my daddy, who could not afford it anyway, thought it unnecessary. A scholarship was out of the question. It was welfare wearing a disguise, and Daddy was too proud to take help.

As I struggled to become the first girl on either side of my family to graduate from high school,

my parents did not understand or support my desire to do so. "What are you gonna do with all that education?" they asked. My older brother ran away from home. My younger sister, a sophomore in high school, married two days after her sixteenth birthday with my parents' blessing. Seventeen years old and a senior in high school, I was labeled as the old maid in the family. When I struggled over algebra problems, how to diagram a sentence, or write a term paper, my mama demanded, "Why don't they teach you how to diaper a baby's bottom and cook a pot of beans? That's what you need to know how to do."

Though I was working forty hours a week as a bookkeeper in a family department store and going to high school fulltime my senior year, I graduated, married immediately, began cooking beans, had a baby, and started washing diapers, just like my mama predicted. But I loved to read. I loved the taste of words in my mouth. I thought that people who had books and magazines in their homes were rich. We did not. I loved learning. Already I had come so far. I had more education than my parents, and I determined that my child would do even better.

As an adult I enrolled part-time at a nearby university. It was the scariest thing that I ever did in my entire life. Five years later I graduated with a college degree, the first person among my kin to achieve that distinction. I have continued to take advantage of adult learning opportunities. My daughter has two degrees and many courses and hours of additional professional training.

More than a century after my granddaddy was born into poverty, his great-great granddaughter (my granddaughter) was born to a life of privilege. She has never known hardship or disappointment, never wanted for anything. She is sixteen years old, a lovely young woman—smart, educated, gifted. If he could meet or correspond with her, my granddaddy would love her. She sends me a text message from her home a mile away:

schl is out
we r go n on vac 2mrrow
lk 4 a pt cd
i b cn u sn
luv Kessie :-)

The past is never lost. Some of it even comes full circle. When I consider my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents, I don't look down, I look up. Though some could not read and write and none had a formal education, they were blessed with self-sufficiency, fortitude and stamina, perseverance and tenacity. They were skilled in survival, oral traditions, folkways, and storytelling. They could butcher a hog, jump a tooth, set a bone, tan a hide, build a coffin, catch a baby, doctor the sick with herbs, and plant by the signs of the moon.

In admiration and respect for my ancestors and their homeland, I look beyond to a time when formal education and the preservation of Appalachian folkways proudly co-exist, when the best of both worlds collide in respect, understanding, and opportunities for mountain people and their environment. Tennessee-bred and cornbread-fed, my spirit and roots reach deep into the Appalachian Mountains by the grace of God, and I am proud. ❖

Judy Lee Green of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is a winner of the James Still Award for Poetry, the Wilma Dykeman Award for essay, the Emma Bell Miles Award for essay, and the Tennessee Mountain Writers Excellence in Writing Award.

PRIMITIVE

By Jeff Kerr

I am an old man now. I got the black lung and my fingers and left shoulder ache when I move the paint brush around the surface of old gourds, slabs of wood, chunks of coal, and such. I been doing this for going on ten years now.

First time I heard the Lord's voice I wasn't but a young man. Probably sixteen and been working in the mines for seven years. The voice was just out of the corner of my hearing like the shadow of a word. I didn't even know it to be a word of any language I'd heard tell of. I knew its meaning by instinct. It was calm and cool like a crick under the pine tree's shadow and the word told me to go and make pictures to tell the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ about times past and times to come. I never did tell nobody because I reckoned people would think I didn't have no sense. I kept it to myself and worked the mines, the big ones, the little ones and every one in between. I took care of my family, fed and clothed them, saw to it that the young'uns got their schooling. Buried my mommy and daddy when their time come to pass. Said my goodbyes to my young'uns as they grew up and made their own lives. Watched them move off to the Army or to work in the factories and warehouses up in Chicago and Ohio. Pictures would come to my mind just like that voice had done, but I'd push the

Illustration by Randy Sanders.

pictures out of my mind and focus on what had to be done in this life.

Like I said, I'd worked all kinds of coal mines through the years from the age of nine to sixty-some years old. I started out with a cart strapped to me like I was a mule. Crawled on my hands and knees pulling a cart of coal, yes sir. Those that owned the big mines had their headquarters way up North or clear over in England. They never did see how we had to work and live. Don't guess they cared to know, either. Eventually, the union came in after years of methane gas explosions and collapses because of the cheap timber holding the world up above our heads. There was bloodshed between us union men and the company goons. If I was hard pressed, I'd put the union right up there with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I worked in darkness. Before the union, all I had was the sputtering flame on a cloth cap. After the union, I had the bobbing light of a battery run lamp on a helmet to find my way through the darkness. I ran stories and scenes through my head while I worked bringing the coal from the earth's innards. Those stories and scenes were what later became my pictures. They was mostly Bible stories and Jesus tales that I'd never heard from the Bible. It was like they was the parts left out or not come to pass. I'd work my pick against the seam of coal and hear the scraping and clicking of other picks and hand drills. Sometimes I would hear a miner start in to singing and his song would echo there in the darkness. The song could be a rowdy number so dirty and raw it'd make me smile in the cool dark. Sometimes the song would be a hymn about redemption that would make me feel secure in the pocket of danger I was in. The mines was a hard dollar, but it was the only dollar I'd ever known and I was glad to get it.

When I got so old I couldn't work no more, I didn't know what to do with myself. I still hunted 'coon with Carl, my old Bluetick. We'd roam the east Kentucky hills at night, pointing my old mining light until we would hit eyes shining like brand new silver dollars. Sometimes I'd drive my green Chevy pickup and visit with my brothers or boys I'd worked with in the mines. Some of them were crippled with broken backs, some lost arms or legs. A sleeve would dangle where an arm used to be. Some hacked and bounced themselves off the floor boards from the black lung. I'd watch them in silence and wonder what part of me I'd left behind in the darkness.

I took this to be the Paradise promised to those who believe in the Lord.

The voices, stories, and pictures would still come into my head until it was like a bucket getting full and I had to do something before it overflowed. I got nervous, downright irritable. I'd let fly with something mean to my wife Reena. She'd turn back to frying apple pies or stringing beans or whatever it was she was doing and leave me to my meanness.

One day I was out dumping a bucket of coal ash from the furnace onto the ash wagon out back by the car shed. I closed my eyes shut and saw beautiful gardens of flowers I'd never seen in these hills. Flowers that swooped and opened like great pink and blue tubas. Flowers as long as train cars golden and shining with their own inner sun. These flowers reached towards the clearest, cleanest blue sky I'd ever seen. Animals of all kinds gathered hide to hair of each other and not a tooth or claw was raised. People naked like children new to the world were smiling and walking among the animals and strange flowers. I took this to be the Paradise promised to those who believe in the Lord. I saw the faces of my mommy and daddy, long gone from this world. I saw the young, untroubled face of my older brother Preston who had been killed by a company goon, shot dead with a sawed-off shotgun in a pool hall in Elkhorn. In this vision of Paradise, Preston was without wounds or troubles of any kind. The faces of the other humans were

those of strangers, but I felt a closeness bind them to me as if they were my own blood kin. I felt a warmth blanket over my body like I was sliding under warm bath water. I felt myself walk towards the car shed where I had some old buckets of house paint. I picked up a wide brush still stiff with old paint and picked up a wide piece of wood. I pried open the can of blue house paint and started in to painting the bluest sky I'd ever seen.

By the time I got done with that first picture, there was a stiffness in my fingers from gripping that paint brush so tight. I called that first painting "Paradise" and leaned it against the wall to dry. I looked the picture over and the people, animals, and such weren't exactly what I saw in my head, but it was close enough. I wasn't trained to be no painter. I was a coal miner. I knew time and practice would make me better.

I felt the touch of my wife's hand on the back of my neck.

"Why that's the prettiest picture I ever did see," Reena said.

I nodded and we watched "Paradise" dry in the Kentucky heat. The green of the mountains began to shadow with the passing of the day.

I started in to making pictures on anything I could get my hands on. Chunks of coal, pieces of barn wood, hollowed-out gourds. These things were all my canvas. I used house paint and house paint brushes. I didn't know no better.

I'd make my pictures and give them away to family members, neighbors, whoever was interested in them. My youngest boy, Hooky, took a couple with him up to Chicago. He had them hung up in his house there. Granton Perkins down at the store had him a couple hanging in his store. That's where the boy from up North first seen them.

He said his name was Levin and he was coming through on his way to Nashville. He said he was in the music business and was looking to do some "field recordings" of Birdie Dyers. Now I knew Birdie Dyers. I'd worked with him in the mines and he used to strum a banjo back when we was young men. He had gone off and made some records in the 1920s over in Bristol, but they didn't do nothing. He give up on the banjo and never did talk about being on no records no more. I reckon he'd been let down by music like it was a woman that had hurt him. He'd do his twelve hours down in the dark like the rest of us. He'd gotten hisself married, baptized, and saved for some years now. I heard he kept that old banjo under the bed.

That Levin, he said that there was interest in Birdie and people wanted him to make some more recordings. I already knew Birdie wouldn't want no part of it, so I kept on like I didn't know Birdie. Levin had been down at the store asking about Birdie when he saw my pictures hanging up there. Levin asked who made the pictures and Granton told him "some crazy man" had made them.

People around here usually ain't too helpful when it comes to strangers asking questions. The Matney boy was buying a bottle of pop and said, "Will Ramey made them pictures."

"Yeah? Where's this Will Ramey live?" Levin asked.

"Just down the road on the right," the Matney boy said, laying some change down on the counter.

"That soda's on me, kid. Take me to this Will Ramey."

I reckon the Matney boy paused long enough for Levin to hand over a crinkled five-dollar bill.

I had been on the front porch on the glider with an old fly swatter across my lap, every now and again waving it at flies. Reena sat next to me stringing beans into her apron. "Lord, who's that a-comin'?" asked Reena. I stood up as one of them little old Japanese cars come up the stone and cinder drive. A shaggy young man with a beard and eyeglasses come out of the car smiling and asking if I was the "artist who made the paintings back at the store."

I didn't say nothing.

He held out his hand as he stood there down on the ground and approached the porch kind of slow like Reena and me was some kind of wild animals. He was talking all the time he approached. He said

he knew all about "folk music" and "folk art" and such.

"What's all that got to do with me, young man?"

"Well, those paintings of yours are interesting. Very interesting. Do you have someone representing you?"

"Do what?" I asked, starting to get aggravated with this stranger wanting something.

"It's like a manager. Someone who takes care of you. You know, someone to sell your paintings and stuff like that."

"Sell them? No, sir. I paint them for the pleasure of the thing. I paint them for our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The Lord?" he said, smiling.

I stared at him kind of hard and said nothing.

"Well, that's good and all, Will. . . ."

"Mr. Ramey. You call me Mr. Ramey," I kindly snapped.

"Mr. Ramey, see, you can sell these paintings for good money. People up in New York, Boston, Chicago. Hell, over in Europe and Japan. Places like that people are hungry for unique artistic voices such as yours. They'll pay good money for paintings like yours," Levin said, a soft smile on his bearded face.

"I got a son lives up in that Chicago. Maybe I should just get him to 'represent' me," I said.

Levin shook his head and said, "You need someone who knows how to maneuver around in the art world. Someone who knows dollars and cents, how to put together art shows, contact galleries, schmooze with critics. That kind of thing."

"I don't guess I want to be bothered with all that mess," I said, swatting a fly.

"Listen, just let me take a couple paintings with me back to New York. That's all I'm asking," Levin said, looking pitiful as a young'un begging for a dime for candy.

I got up off of the glider, climbed down the steps of the porch, and went out back towards the car shed. Levin followed behind at a short distance. He kept up his jabbering about this and that, but I never paid no mind.

I swung open the car shed door and the light hit painting after painting piled against the walls.

"Holy shit," said Levin.

"Don't blaspheme," I told him.

"Sorry, it's just . . . there's so much of it and such a variety."

He went into the car shed and picked up a gourd that had a painting of Jesus and the Devil in a bare knuckles fist fight. It had the words "Who Will Win?" painted across the top.

"Sell them? No, sir. I paint them for the pleasure of the thing. I paint them for our Lord Jesus Christ."

"This is beautiful," Levin said.

"Take it with you and see what you can do with it," I heard myself say and was surprised that I had spoken the words.

Levin ran his hands over the gourd. He looked at me and said, "You're a gifted man, Mr. Ramey."

I helped him load three pictures into the back of that tiny car of his, and he wrote down my phone number on the back of a paper bag stained with ketchup.

"I'll call you and let you know how things are going," he said, ripping the phone number from the rest of the bag.

"All right then."

He got into his car, started it up, waved at Reena and me, and backed out. I figured that would be the end of that, but it was far from it.

Must've been two months later I got a check in the mail from Langston Galleries in New York City. It was for two hundred dollars. They bought all three of them pictures Levin took with him. I shook my head looking down at that

check. I smiled and put it way safe until I could get to the bank on Monday.

Next day I got a phone call from Levin. He asked me if I got that check and I said I did. He seemed kindly nervous on the phone. He asked me if I was satisfied and I said that I was. He seemed relieved and asked if I could send more pictures. I told him that I would be glad to. He gave me an address to send the pictures to.

I had the Matney boy help me pack up all the pictures I could. I put them in the back of the truck and drove down to the Elkhorn Post Office.

"Sure a lot of pictures," the Matney boy said. "What they want with all them pictures?"

"Must be a picture shortage in New York," I said with a straight face.

The Matney boy laughed as I opened the truck door.

This went on for some years. I'd do my pictures and send them off and a check for a couple hundred dollars or so would get sent to me. I used the money to buy a new shotgun, new refrigerator. I built a new pen for my dog. When the grand young'uns came home from up North, I'd go and buy them the things I didn't have when I was a young'un, pretties and candy and such.

Sometimes I'd get a letter or a telephone call from some person or other wanting to "represent" me and I'd tell them no. I'd tell them that I was going to stick with Mr. Levin. I told them I owed him everything that come to me for my pictures.

I noticed that the pictures in my mind came less and less. I'd force them to come or some ghost of what I thought they should be. Sometimes I just painted the same picture over and over, making little changes here and there.

One day I went to the Post Office to get the mail and there was an envelope from Levin. I opened it, excited for the check, and inside was nothing but a scrap of newspaper with a picture of Levin grinning with some of my pictures hanging up on the wall behind him. I could only make out a few of the words of writing since I didn't get too much schooling on account of having to work in the mines as a young'un.

I had the Matney boy read me what the words on the scrap of newspaper said. It was all about how I lived in Kentucky all my life and been a coal miner and religious. I didn't consider myself religious as I didn't belong to no organized church, but worshipped in my own way. The newspaper scrap said I was an "unschooled artist" and was selling paintings for "upwards of five thousand dollars a piece." I remembered the look of all those hundred-dollar checks, and now I knew I'd gotten the hind tit. I felt the way I used to feel back when I worked the mines before the unions came. I felt like the world weren't no fair place at all.

The Matney boy cleared his throat and kept on reading the scrap. It said how I was "part of the primitive school of art." I grabbed the piece of newspaper and said, "What's that word mean? Primitive?"

"I think it means like bein' a caveman or somethin' like that," the Matney boy said.

I got mad and told him I wanted to know just exactly what that word "primitive" was. He looked kindly scared and said he'd find out. He walked off the porch and said he'd fetch one of his school books. I sat on the glider and stared at the scrap of newspaper until he come back with that school book. He sat on the plank steps and flipped through the pages.

"Primitive," he read, "not derived from something else, primary. Of or relating to an earliest or original stage or state, primeval."

He paused.

"Go on."

"Characterized by simplicity or crudity, unsophisticated," he read, his voice a low and crawling thing.

I felt myself shaking, my mind flashing with white hot anger.

"Of or relating to a nonindustrial, often tribal culture having a simple economy. Relating or belonging to forces of nature; elemental. Of or created by an artist without formal training; simple or naive in style."

"That means it ain't no count," I heard myself say.

"An unsophisticated person. One that is at a

low or early stage of development," he continued reading, his voice a low blur to me by now.

"That's enough. I've heard enough."

The Matney boy turned and looked at me and said, "They don't know what they're talkin' about. If they had any sense . . . ."

"Go on home now. Your mommy's probably huntin' you up for supper," I said and stood.

The Matney boy left and I went into the house. I felt Reena's hand on my shoulder. She had heard what the Matney boy had read. I still held the scrap of newspaper in my hand, and I crumbled it up and tossed it into the plastic trash can I spit tobacco in.

I never did say nothing to Levin about that newspaper scrap and what all it said. He probably thought I would have been happy to know I was being written about in a big city newspaper like that. I let my anger fade off into sadness, and then I wrapped that sadness up inside of me. I just kept on making my pictures and sending them off. Levin kept on sending me them checks. He was just another boss is the way I looked at it. Just another boss is all. ❖

Jeff Kerr writes and lives in Waukegan, Illinois. His roots go deep in southeastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia. He is a 2006 Denny C. Plattner Award winner for his short story, "The Miner's Friend."

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Window shoppers, 1958, downtown Johnson City, Tennessee.
From the James Garvin Ellis Negative Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

BOXING LESSON

By Dan C. Jones

Thud. Another blow had just landed on the left side of my head. I went down on my right knee, confused, wondering what to do next. "Danny, get up! Get up!" yelled Coach Fairbanks from the corner of the ring. Just as I got to my feet, the bell rang, marking the end of the first round. I had been knocked down three times.

My brief "boxing career" started in the fall of 1953 when my father bought me a pair of boxing gloves and a punching bag, an act clearly motivated by his firm belief that my engagement in this sport would help "make a man" of me. I had told him that White Oak Elementary School, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where I was a student in the sixth grade, was putting together a boxing team to train for competition in the Golden Gloves.

Raymond Jones, my father, served as a radioman on a mine sweep in the U.S. Navy during World War II and had come home in 1945 a bitter, sullen man, dissatisfied with prospects for his life as a house painter. He took pride in his work and was highly skilled, but he was profoundly unhappy in work and life. He also suffered from alcoholism, an affliction which clouds my memories of him from the time he returned from the war until his death over fifty years later. In all the photos that remain, there is not a single smile from this Burt Lancaster-handsome, dark-haired, rugged-looking man.

In contrast, among my very earliest childhood memories is an image of my remarkably beautiful young mother, formerly Frances Strickland, holding my hand as I watched the "soldier boys" marching down Market Street in downtown Chattanooga. And I think I remember Mother telling me that Daddy was a "soldier boy" (even though he was in fact a sailor) who would soon be coming home. I also remember walking down the sidewalk with my mother and having to duck my head to avoid women who would reach out to touch my curly red hair, which was not cut until my father came home. During the two years before that time, I was raised by my mother, who bore a strong resemblance to the dark-haired actress Jane Wyman, and my witty and charming maternal grandmother, Anna Lee, whom I called Nanny then and for the rest of her

The author's Christmas gifts in 1953 reflected a conflict between sports and music, although the musical instrument was a toy, not a real trumpet.

life. We lived in a small house on Chamberlain Avenue, near the foot of Missionary Ridge—an area where both my mother and my father grew up.

After the war, sometimes with the help of some friends and relatives but mostly by himself, he laid the concrete blocks for our new house on Ridgewood Avenue, near the foot of Signal Mountain, where my family lived until the divorce in 1962. The small and imperfectly constructed house was built on property given to us by my paternal grandparents. We lived, almost literally, in my grandparents' backyard. And Granddaddy (Dave) and Mamaw (Bertha) Jones would have as much to do with my development as would my own parents—because I saw them every day. Their house became a place of refuge during times of difficulty between my parents. Going to Engel Stadium to see the Chattanooga Lookouts baseball team with Granddaddy and fishing with him on the banks of Chickamauga Lake are among the most positive and meaningful memories of my childhood. Granddaddy became, as I saw it then, the father I really wanted but did not have.

Like many children of alcoholics, my coping strategy was to try, at all costs, to avoid conflict with my father by remaining silent when he was drinking, above all not arguing, and judiciously retreating next door to visit with Granddaddy when I could. When my sister Kelley came along, her strategy became more confrontational. She received more whippings than I, although we both got our share. These beatings were always administered by my father with a switch broken from the hedge in our backyard.

The neighborhood children provided another type of refuge—escape through play and pursuit of adventure. Johnny Sisson, who also had boxing gloves, was a year younger than I and had long, dark hair which contrasted sharply with my much shorter red hair. Johnny lived two houses down the street in a small house much like my own. After having my own gloves for a few weeks, I naturally grew tired of hitting the punching bag tied to a tree in the yard and wanted to get some actual practice. Johnny agreed to bring his gloves to our house so we both could get some practice and test our mettle.

The backyard fight, just the two of us, began harmlessly with soft, light jabs. But then I delivered, quite suddenly, a hard right hand to Johnny's face. He dropped to the earth, not making a sound. "Are you o.k.?" I asked. I feared that I had killed him. But finally, after a minute or so, he began to move and then make an effort to get up. The fight was over, and my confidence soared.

I wanted to please my father, knowing the expectations that he had for "his boy."

That night I told my father all about my victory. "I hit him hard, and he went down," I said. "He didn't hurt me at all."

"I'm proud of you, son," he said softly. He may have said other things, but those words are the only ones I remember. I basked in the glory of his approval.

This success led to my joining the boxing team at White Oak School, where Coach Skipper Fairbanks, a former Golden Gloves champion in Chattanooga, volunteered his time to teach young people the skills and possibly the values that he had acquired through experiences in his own amateur boxing career.

Coach Fairbanks had to know I wasn't much of an athlete. He had coached me in other sports, and I had been unsuccessful in all of them—tackle football, knothole baseball, and YMCA league basketball. I had attempted them mainly because I desperately wanted approval from my friends at school for something other than academic success and because I wanted to please my father, knowing the expectations that he had for "his boy." In those team sports, I had spent most of the time on the bench. But in boxing, an individual sport, I believed there was an opportunity for success—just me and my opponent, with no teammates to let down.

I didn't think I had learned very much in training except some basics—the stance in relation to the opponent and the recommended positions of the arms and fists, for example. The coach, if he had any judgment, most likely spent most of his time with more promising young fighters. But train I did, several times each week, up to the time of the scheduled fight in the Golden Gloves, sub-novice division, at the Frye Institute in downtown Chattanooga.

The bout was to be in the evening, and I was concerned about my preparation and, secretly, about my abilities. I even called Coach Fairbanks to find out what I could and could not eat for supper prior to the fight. Somehow this detail had been overlooked in the limited instructions I had received. The worst of it, however, was yet to come.

My father came home drunk after work that evening, not able to take me to the fight or even attend it. I remember him yelling about something and then passing out on the couch. As always, I did not complain, and as always, when Daddy let me down, I went next door and asked Granddaddy to help out.

That night I hated my father. He had gotten me into this mess to begin with by giving me those boxing gloves, praising me for cold-cocking Johnny Sisson, and making it clear there must be something wrong with me for not being competitive enough. Something wrong with me for failing in sports, for having real passions for "sissy stuff" like reading books, for listening to Benny Goodman records and achieving good grades in school.

My grandfather calmed me down by helping me focus on what lay ahead and promising me he would take me there, stay for the fight, and take me home afterward. "Calm down," he said. "Let's just focus on tonight."

On the way to the fight in Granddaddy's black Dodge, I became more and more afraid. Two weeks earlier, I learned that my opponent was named Steel. I imagined being hit with a steel beam, my head crushed on the pavement. And just as frightening was the knowledge that Steel was in the eighth grade in another school, Tyner, while I was in sixth. This guy surely was going to be more coordinated, more capable.

We both weighed in at eighty-six pounds, and neither of us had fight experience, but somehow those things didn't seem very important. I don't remember exactly what Granddaddy said to me that night, but I do remember being awfully glad he was there.

Skipper Fairbanks' major advice for me was to be aggressive. "Keep moving forward," he said. "Keep swinging." He and I both were hoping that if I threw enough punches, I could get lucky and somehow make up for my obvious deficiencies. So I did just that—kept moving forward, kept throwing punches. But every time I moved forward and threw punches, Steel bopped me in the face—hard. I would fall down and then hear a groan coming from the crowd. But I didn't feel pain. I put my mouthpiece back in place, popped back up, and continued swinging.

I was knocked down nine times in three rounds, and the fight was never stopped. I always got right up and started moving forward once again, perhaps blindly and foolishly following the same type of advice my father had given me before he had come home drunk, yelled at me and my mother, and passed out on the couch two hours before. It was hard to get seriously hurt with sixteen-ounce

The author's grandparents, Dave and Bertha Jones, in 1952. They lived next door to their son's family in the White Oak community north of Chattanooga.

gloves and protective headgear, but I did feel pain, deep inside, when I lost so badly.

My grandfather was there for me, but whatever he said I didn't hear. I only thought of the humiliation of that evening and having to go to school the next day with my face swollen. After the fight, Granddaddy took me home, I went to bed, and then I cried.

I probably learned something from the experience, but not what my father wanted me to learn. I eventually discovered that the vision held by my father, the vision that included my future, was not one I was destined to share. The lessons so memorably taught by Daddy and Coach Fairbanks were not ones I was going to accept. My own vision, for my own future, was forming. It did not include the need to hurt others to get ahead. It did not include the need to use aggression to gain an advantage. It did not include the need to look good or impress others with the abilities I possessed. It did not include even the goal of "being a man," at least in the sense that my father intended. My new goal was indeed to be a man, but on my own terms. It's no wonder that just a few years later I would identify so strongly with Eugene Gant and George Webber, characters the novelist Thomas Wolfe depicted so beautifully and so profoundly in similar kinds of struggles.

The year after the boxing lesson, I would trade in my boxing gloves for a Noblet clarinet, a renewed public library card, and a new life in pursuit of becoming the next Benny Goodman. ❖

A native of the White Oak community north of Chattanooga, Dan Jones is now retired after a career as an English professor and division administrator at Wytheville Community College in Virginia. He and his wife, Reta, live in her hometown, Jefferson City, Tennessee, where Dan teaches part-time at his alma mater, Carson-Newman College, and at Walters State Community College.

CHEST-MESSAGING IN THE COALFIELDS:
A LOOK BACK AT THE T-SHIRTS OF THE PITTSTON STRIKE

By Marat Moore

I call it my year of living camo—the long months in 1989-90 when the Pittston Company, a corporate coal king in Southern Appalachia at the time, provoked a strike by the United Mine Workers of America after backing out of national negotiations. The strike was more than a year in coming; after the negotiations impasse, Pittston yanked health care benefits from its retired coal miners and infuriated UMWA families. In 1989 I was a UMWA staffer sent to the strike zone to work with the union's women's auxiliaries, aided by talented women miners.

The strike's Ground Zero was Southwest Virginia, particularly Dickenson and Russell counties. And one of the UMWA's early strategic decisions involved the strike "uniform." Union leaders chose camouflage, which raised questions. Why choose the fabric of war to carry out a campaign based on the nonviolence of Dr. Martin Luther King? But the stuff was cheap and available, and like any uniform, it broadcast the power of the collective and hid individual strike leaders from view.

The use of fabric to denote protest and solidarity has a long tradition in the UMWA. In the bitter struggle to unionize nearly a century ago, miners risked beatings or worse by wearing red kerchiefs around their necks to declare their allegiance to the fledgling union. Being a "redneck" was a badge of honor, as camo was at Pittston.

T-shirts were everywhere, and like the strike, they evolved in unpredictable ways. The first official UMWA strike T-shirt displayed a Biblical message in bright yellow on the camo: "Overcome Evil with Good" on the front; "In God We Trust—UMWA" on the back.

As mining families engaged with each other and the union, however, their energy poured out in a flood of creativity—maybe two dozen T-shirt designs as well as strike-themed quilts and camo sunbonnets, sundresses, and baby clothes.

T-shirts reflected the strike hierarchy. There were the bottom-up T-shirts, produced by the local unions or women's auxiliaries ("Hounding Pounding Crew . . ." and "Daughters of Mother Jones") or supporters in other parts of the country.

Workers united. Photo courtesy author.

There were the big-union "Overcome Evil . . ." shirts that moved down the hierarchy. There were political cartoon shirts with an edge of humor, and more T-shirt messages from more militant union districts not sanctioned by the UMWA such as "We Will, We Will Rock You" with emblems of "jackrocks" (nails spot-welded to puncture the tires of strikebreakers). There were non-camo shirts—many produced by the women's auxiliaries who moved away from the camo theme as some grew more independent of the UMWA.

"We were in Abingdon, and a Pittston lawyer told us to quit hounding him and Mike Odum, who headed up Pittston in Virginia," recalled Cosby Totten, former woman miner and an organizer of the UMWA auxiliaries. "By the end of the day we made it 'the hounding and pounding crew.'"

Auxiliary members expanded their camo color choices. "We liked the green camo for the picket line but found blue and pink camo to wear for dressier occasions," Totten said. "The black District 28 Auxiliary shirts were for fundraising at local businesses. Usually we figured out what to wear in advance, so we would be a unit. Dressing the same had a great degree of safety in it for all of us."

T-shirts from the Marat Moore Collection,
Reece Museum, East Tennessee State University.

As the strike wore on, attire was accessorized. Women made jackrock earrings, both casual and elegant. Union leaders wore camo ties. Yellow ribbons sprouted on storefronts in Clintwood and on camo-covered strike scrapbooks.

Jesse Jackson wore camo at strike rallies. So did Cesar Chavez, AFL-CIO head Lane Kirkland, Siberian miners on their first trip abroad, striking pilots, and the giant puppets of the Bread and Puppet Theatre.

I remember the summer of 1989 as a sea of camouflage that flowed from picket lines to courtrooms, up to Greenwich, Connecticut, where Pittston was headquartered, and back to Camp Solidarity, a makeshift camp in Russell County, Virginia, with bunkhouses that drew thousands of supporters from across the country and overseas.

High-school students formed their own UMWA auxiliaries and wore camo to school.

Strikers kept their sense of humor. For example, the "Hounding Pounding Crew . . ." shirt had a hound-dog puppy and a hammer on the back, and stray dogs adopted as strike mascots wore camo bandanas.

Camo was everywhere, and then it was gone. The outcome could not be called a victory for the thousands of mineworkers and their families who sacrificed and put themselves on the line. But whenever I see the hills of southwest Virginia, mantled in green and brown, I wonder if former strikers kept their T-shirts, as I have, as mementoes of the unforgettable union solidarity that defined that historic strike. ❖

Jesse Jackson (center) in camo at a strike rally.

Marat Moore has worked as a labor journalist, editor, photographer, and union coal miner. She's the author of *Women in the Mines: Stories of Life and Work*. A native of Johnson City, Tennessee, Moore lives with husband and dog in the New Deal community of Greenbelt, Maryland.

HANDS

Linda Parsons Marion

She got right in there, knuckle to wrist, meatloaf
and salmon croquettes, her fingered sieve doughing
the plain wedding ring with the night's plainer meat.
Marie lived by those hands, kneaded broadcloth through
needle at the lint-snowed garment factory, never hesitated
to hunker down in the mixing bowl, rail at the drunken
misdirection of my grandfather. Unflinching in the world's
devilry–my mother's shenanigans with a married man–
she grabbed me up, paid dimes and nickels to sweep
the porch, whiten tea stains with Bon Ami, until all
was made straight in His wondrous sight. She bequeathed
them to me: long and flighty, they hem perennial seams
with silver trowel, dig and delve, pat and mound
the mineral fabric, stitch me wholly in grandmother earth.

Linda Parsons Marion has been poetry editor of *Now & Then* magazine for thirteen years. Her new poetry collection, *Mother Land*, was published by Iris Press.

FROM QUILTS TO CHENILLE BEDSPREADS TO CARPETS

By Lydia F. Knight

Peacock Alley and Bedspread Boulevard were once popular names for the stretch of U.S. 41 between Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Dalton, Georgia. Along that highway were spreadlines displaying colorful chenille bedspreads, including the popular Peacock pattern. My family home was located on that highway, and as we would drive along, I often saw those bedspreads fluttering in the breeze. After the completion of Interstate 75, which resulted in the re-routing of tourist traffic, the spreadlines dwindled until they finally disappeared. As a child I had no idea that these bedspreads were inspired by a fifteen-year-old girl in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

Catherine Evans Whitener was born August 10, 1880, on a small farm in Whitfield County, Georgia. She was the second child of seven, and her education ended at the fifth-grade level, which was common for young girls in rural Georgia at the end of the nineteenth century. When she was twelve, Catherine saw an heirloom candlewick bedspread in a relative's home and was impressed by its handcrafted beauty. The bedspread was stitched with a white-on-white design in small squares laid out like a quilt. She vowed to make a similar bedspread for herself someday. In 1895, at fifteen, Catherine decided to begin making her own bedspread. Her mother did not think she could finish such a time-consuming project, for a farm girl did not have much leisure time after the daily chores.

Candlewicking was originally a colonial craft designed by homemakers to disguise and beautify darns in tablecloths and sheets. Leftover bits of candlewick were used to make loop stitches, which were cut and the threads fluffed out after laundering. Candlewicking was nearly a lost art and there were no instructions or pattern books available. Curious and innovative, Catherine had to figure out how to duplicate the heirloom bedspread and invented her own tufting stitch technique. First she marked the pattern with pencil in squares of three inches, using quilting frames. She based her pattern on the Irish Chain quilt pattern. She took white thread in skeins and used a spinning wheel

Catherine Evans Whitener. Photo courtesy Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection.

to make twelve strands of yarn. Next, this resourceful teenager modified a bodkin by grinding the blunt end into a fine point and began stitching. A running stitch was sewn in the base sheeting and then cut between the stitches to create a soft pile surface.

When she finally finished sewing, Catherine laundered the spread in boiling water, which tightened the sheeting at the base of the threads. Drying the spread outdoors on a line further increased the fluffing of the cut threads, creating a surface that reminded her of grass. She called the process "turfing." In her first project, Catherine used the crafts of candlewicking, quilting, spinning, and embroidering—all traditional handcrafts of Appalachian women. After finishing this time-consuming project, Catherine thought she would never attempt another bedspread.

A year later, she "had forgotten the trouble" and decided to make another one. This time, she said, "I got along fine with this one." Catherine called the second pattern Spear and Circle. She made a third bedspread in a star pattern four years later as a wedding gift for her brother Eugene and his bride. The bride's sister, Mrs. John Lange, was impressed with the gift and wanted to buy a similar bedspread. Catherine was hesitant at first and unsure what to charge. It cost her $1.25 in materials and she sold the new bedspread for $2.50. According to Catherine, "She wanted to pay more, but I did not want to charge too much. Then a man worked for a dollar a day. This was the first sale of a tufted spread." The transaction took place in 1900.

When Mrs. Lange's friends saw her bedspread, more orders came in for Catherine. Marking the pattern in pencil was very laborious, so Catherine came up with a stamping method. She laid a finished spread on the floor and then the unfinished sheeting on top. Taking a tin box lid which had been lightly covered with grease, she gently rubbed the tin lid over the pattern, making dots on the sheeting. These dots would wash out later.

Stamping the patterns enabled Catherine to share her work with others. She was getting so many orders that she began sharing the techniques and patterns with other women. To keep up with her orders, she would stamp the spreads and other ladies would take them home and stitch them. Then she would boil them in a wash pot and dry them on lines in the sun. The network of women grew to include stamping, stitching, laundering, and selling the bedspreads. Locals called themselves "turfers." The cottage industry was actually a front-porch activity, and the whole family would gather to help with the stitching. These family businesses, called spread houses, began displaying their finished bedspreads on the spreadlines along U.S. 41 about 1910.

A local cotton mill began supplying Catherine with white yarn, which saved time previously devoted to spinning. The original bedspreads were done in white on white, but people began requesting colored spreads. Catherine wrote to a dye company in Rhode Island and requested samples of their colors. She began sending the white yarn to be dyed and returned to her. Later a dye plant was opened in Chattanooga. The cotton mill and dye plant were early examples of how the local businesses were being affected by this cottage industry.

It cost her $1.25 in materials and she sold the new bedspread for $2.50.

The bedspread designs were geometric or floral, and some were based on quilt patterns. Plates, saucers, and bowls were used to trace patterns. Catherine had several patterns she designed. Among these were Square Circle, Star and Circle, Wild Rose, Bowknot Rose, Flower Basket, Acorn, Daisy, Interlacing Ring, Doughnut, Hexagon, and Wedding Ring. The influence of traditional quilt patterns can be seen in some of her design names. The raised designs from tufts of thick yarn came to be called chenille, from the French word for caterpillars.

The immensely popular Peacock pattern outsold the other designs by twelve to one. Tourists loved this bright, gaudy pattern, and it was a local joke that only Yankees bought the Peacock bedspreads. A special spread in the traditional white-on-white pattern was ordered for Scarlett O'Hara's bed in *Gone With the Wind*.

In 1917 Catherine and her brother formed the Evans Manufacturing Company, and in 1922 Catherine married W. L. Whitener. By this time she was making bedspreads, mats, and kimonos. Several women had started their own spread businesses and were making a good income. In the 1920s, the chenille cottage industry snowballed as yarn and sheeting mills and dye plants were built to supply the raw materials and for stamping sheets. Machine shops were set up to create multi-needle machines. The Singer Sewing Machine Company in Chattanooga developed machines with 1,500 needles to make parallel rows of tufting. Laundries were constructed for finishing chenille products. Printing shops were needed for tags and labels. Box factories filled the need for cartons and packing. Transportation was provided by rail and motor freight for deliveries. Spreads were sold at Chicago's Marshall Field, Wanamaker's of Philadelphia, and Rich's of Atlanta. By the late 1920s, more than 10,000 people in the Dalton area were tufting at home. Catherine made a huge difference in women's lives, providing a home-based occupation that would give them economic freedom.

Originally a source of pin money for the women, by the Depression tufting became a way to survive. In 1933 the New Deal influenced the move from cottage industry to factories. The National Recovery Administration encouraged mechanization through wage and hour standards and the NRA Tufted Bedspread Code. The chenille industry insured the economic survival of many families in northwest Georgia during the Depression. With the machinery, thousands of spreads could be made for twelve to fourteen cents each.

Some women with children did not want to leave home for the mills. However, the mechanization made it harder for the home workers to make enough money, because the manufacturers could not pay them as much as in the past. Soon they were making only $1.25 to $1.75 per week, down from $3.50 to $4.00 per week. In August of 1936, 2,000 home "turfers" met at the Dalton courthouse to protest the low wages.

Small chenille rugs and bath mats were very popular in a period when most homes had three to four rugs in the bedroom and two in the bathroom. People wanted larger and larger rugs, and machinery for making them led to broadloom carpets. Traditional woven carpet was very expensive, and only the wealthy could afford it in their homes. In the 1950s, the invention of machines to tuft nine- and twelve-foot sections of fabric produced tufted carpet more economically than woven carpet. Wall-to-wall carpet became an affordable option for many homeowners. Other innovations in backing materials and synthetic fibers also made carpet more durable and affordable. The roadside signs for chenille spreadlines on Highway 41 were gradually replaced by carpet outlet signs on Interstate 75.

Currently more than ninety percent of U.S. carpet manufactured is tufted. In 1950, only ten percent of carpet was tufted. At one time, Dalton, Georgia, had more millionaires than any other city in the United

Photo courtesy Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection.

States. The mills in Dalton produce eighty percent of the carpet made in the United States. By 2006 the Georgia carpet industry had grown to 45,000 workers, with a $4 billion payroll.

Catherine Evans Whitener was known for her generosity. Her willingness to share patterns and techniques and occasionally lend money ensured the continued growth of the chenille industry and its evolution into the carpet industry. She shared patterns and support with the Bandys when they first started out. B.J. and Dicksie Bandy owned some dry goods stores in the area. When the post-World War I recession hit and people could not pay their accounts, the Bandys ended up $20,000 in debt to their suppliers. Determined not to go bankrupt, they went into the chenille business. Catherine agreed to help and also gave them three or four patterns to get started. B.J. and Dicksie Bandy went on to become the first to make a million dollars from chenille.

Catherine changed the lives of many women in northwest Georgia. Her sister-in-law, Mrs. Eugene Evans, was involved in forming the Evans Manufacturing Company. This was the same woman who received the wedding gift of the star pattern bedspread. Mrs. H. L. Jarvis, wife of a dentist, became Catherine's agent in selling her bedspreads. Mrs. Jessie Bates started the J.T. Bates Candlewick chenille business. Mrs. Fred Caldwell began delivering materials and bedspreads and started her own chenille business. When a customer requested a chenille bathrobe, Mrs. Caldwell made a pattern and sold all she could make. By World War II, she was able to retire. And the list goes on—women who were inspired to start their own businesses, which provided the foundation for future companies in the Dalton area.

Though she never became wealthy, Catherine and her husband lived very comfortably, and she received many honors. She was the guest of honor when the Tufted Textile Manufacturers Association opened its headquarters in Dalton in 1958. At her death in 1964, her obituary appeared in the *New York Times*. A declaration from Congress that same year recognized her as founder of the carpet industry. She was inducted into the Georgia Women of Achievement in 2001 and the Junior Achievement Northwest Georgia Business Hall of Fame in 2006.

Catherine Evans Whitener's influences are broad and deep. Through her ingenuity, a local handcraft evolved into a national industry. Rural mountain women gained financial independence for their families, and some founded companies that survive today. And chenille bedspreads are now collectible folk art. Who could have predicted that a teenage girl's ingenuity would one day influence the social, economic, and cultural structure of the entire region of northwest Georgia?

Catherine herself put it best: "When I was a girl, I wished that I had been a boy. Because a boy could find work to make money, and there was nothing a girl could do to earn money. I feel now that God knew best, and I am glad that I was a girl." ❖

Lydia F. Knight is the director of the Derrell C. Roberts Library at Dalton State College in Dalton, Georgia.

IN THE WOOL

Tonya Northenor

My hands are twisted creek roots
shaped by the current of repeated water
and small knocks from whatever moves downstream.
These braided hands, curved like a spoon
and fashioned for their purpose over time.
When I am not at the bread or the washboard
I sit with my weaving. The loom large as
a furnace, with its own flame of dyed wool
strung on the shuttle. Sumac and dandelion root make
my color. You will know it if you see it
on the poor souls of these woods.
They are cardinals in a world of green.

From my bench at the loom I have seen the creek
carry life past: I know it is not dull,
yet my eyes have turned watery
as if the world is always spring mists over the mountains.
Don't I still pull the bobbin with sure fingers?
Fingers worn to its touch as it is warped to theirs.
But I feel cold. It grows time to change colors.
With blackberries and red cedar root I must
make blue for the weft. I will unpin
my old gray mane and let it drop toward my work.
Will weave into the wool whatever falls loose
into this new, wintry blue world.

Tonya Northenor lives on her family's fifth-generation farm in Kentucky and is an English instructor at Owensboro Community and Technical College. She earned an MFA from the University of Memphis.

APPALACHIAN QUILTING

By Georgia Bonesteel

The state of quilting is alive and well in my "neck of the woods." When I moved to Hendersonville, North Carolina, over thirty-five years ago, I witnessed old-fashioned frame quilting and even some square frames that dropped from the ceiling on pulleys. With the advent of the computerized sewing machine and the long-arm quilting machine, we are far removed from those days of the drop-down square frame. In equipment, methods, and design, quilting is a very contemporary discipline.

I am often asked if quilt-making is a growing craft, and if so, how does it sustain itself? Allow me to answer these questions, and along the way, encourage you to join our wonderful world of quilting.

Historically, the basic idea of a quilt was to make something beautiful and useful from leftover material. Our forebears would likely smile at our "new" green revolution mentality—for out of necessity they experienced recycling in ways we have only begun to practice.

Currently, there is a seemingly endless palette of fabrics, solids and patterns in infinite colors and textures, and coordinated collections that take one's breath away. Physical and virtual stores, catalogues, and specialty magazines present fabrics as visual feasts—propelling a quilter toward that next project. Truth-be-told, without fabric to cut, or a current or

Georgia Bonesteel. Photo courtesy Paul Bonesteel.

anticipated next project, we quilters often feel at proverbial "loose-ends."

Much has been written about the impact globalization has had on the textile industry in the United States. For good and ill, much of our quilt fabric is printed outside this country. However, what remains true, no matter where the fabric is made, is this: We have an obligation to make our quilts as close-to-perfect as possible. Quilts are very often cherished possessions, pieces of ourselves that live on after us. Whether we are making a quilt as a special gift, for show competition, or for the meditative pleasure of the work, striving for excellence speaks volumes about each of us, no matter our current level of proficiency.

Yes, it takes time and money to make a quilt, but more than anything it takes motivation and gumption. How does one buy that? You cannot place a dollar sign on such attributes. We depend on bonding friendships for inspiration and community.

I am not atypical of quilters today in that I belong to three quilt guilds and two "groupies." Recently our PTA (Piecing, Talking, and Appliqué) group traveled to Burnsville, North Carolina, to see the latest display at a gallery, visit a new quilt shop, eat lunch, have tea, and admire Barbara Webster's installation at City Hall. We see these get-togethers as more than social gatherings—they are learning opportunities. Each of us, with different backgrounds, achievements, goals, and desires, share a passion for working with fabric and learning from one another.

Another "groupie" to which I belong, Cover Lovers, has a twenty-six year history. Think of that, more than a quarter century of shared experiences!

As Betsy Freeman writes, "Quilts are made for our families, our babies, our wounded from the war. Brides open wedding gifts of handmade quilts. Parents receive anniversary quilts made by their children, young or grown up. Our children become graduates and carry with them a denim or plaid quilt from their nests to their dorms . . . . Everyone calls us quilters. But it is so much more than just the quilting. It is friendship and sisterhood."

Returning to those questions often asked of me: is quilt-making a growing craft, and if so, how does it sustain itself? Certainly, with the proliferation of exhibitions, competitions, periodicals, books, guilds, and general public interest, quilting has never been more popular than it is today. I attribute the rise of quilt-making to a network of keen, imaginative minds and steady hands, joined in industrious work. And as to sustaining the craft? —well, that's easy—the lasting bonds of "fabric friendships" insure quilt-making's perpetuation—whether those friendships were formed around square frames dropped from the ceiling or are formed at a computerized sewing machine. ❖

For over thirty years, Georgia Bonesteel has been a leader in the quilt world. As the creator and host of *Lap Quilting with Georgia Bonesteel*, produced with North Carolina Public Television, she has shared her enthusiasm and love of quilting on television since 1979. In 2005, she partnered with her son, filmmaker Paul Bonesteel, to produce the documentary *The Great American Quilt Revival*. She is a graduate of Northwestern University.

A NEW FACE IN THE FIELDS: ALPACAS IN APPALACHIA

By Michael Joslin

When I visited Apple Hill Farm in Watauga County, North Carolina, in August of 2008, alpaca mothers and their bouncing babies seized my attention. Still damp from birth, golden Cuervo circled his white mother Margarita on surprisingly sturdy legs. When his proud mother clucked to him, the little fellow sought her teats to nurse, but he also explored the paddock, visiting the one-day-old Black Boy, son of Meadow Lily, as the mothers talked quietly in chuckling tones back and forth. When Meadow Lily and Black Boy joined Lucky and her milk-chocolate-brown baby, Bambi, for a gambol in the pasture, Cuervo kept just missing the gate and ending up back in the paddock as Margarita gurgled encouragement. Watching the progress of the young alpacas, called crias, I thought of the many times I have photographed newborn livestock as I have documented new generations. For years I have followed the ups and downs of livestock in Appalachia with hopes that sustainable agriculture can help form the future of the mountains.

Around twenty-five years ago, I wrote my first feature on Western North Carolina. I visited Jim and Delores Miller's farm for a sheep-shearing. Good humor and optimism filled the air as the electric clippers stripped the thick coat from the squirming sheep. We were in the midst of another effort to reintroduce sheep as a cash crop in the mountains. I left the Mitchell County, North Carolina, homestead full of hope for the future of farming.

I still remember my lead, "Sheep, those biblical animals, are making a comeback in the mountains of Western North Carolina." The beasts produce both meat and wool, providing a double chance for success. The vision I shared with many others who loved the rural aspect of the area appeared to have life. It was a vision with a long and distinguished heritage.

When botanists and scientists such as Andre Michaux and Elisha Mitchell surveyed the rich soil and verdant land of the high country surrounding Grandfather Mountain, the Roan, and the Black Mountains, they predicted a future in which domestic livestock would gradually displace wild herbivores—the deer, elk, and buffalo that had ranged the grassy balds and lush valleys for centuries. The botanists' dream was soon realized.

Photograph courtesy Michael Joslin.

By 1850 Yancey County, North Carolina, home to Mount Mitchell, the highest mountain in the East, supported 29,000 swine, 20,000 sheep, and 10,000 cattle.

Since that time farmers have feasted and starved as the price of stock rose or plunged. Twice I have reported on the upsurge of sheep farming in the Toe River Valley, only to see each farm fail because of predatory animals and low lamb prices. The Millers have long since quit raising sheep, and three other families I wrote about have also sold their stock. Wool failed to support the flocks, and when meat prices fell, farmers suffered. With the international trade in lamb, market forces that area farmers cannot control have killed sheep as a viable source of income for Toe River Valley folks.

Wool comes from sheep; finer fiber comes from alpacas.

However, this past couple of years I have followed the progress of another beast that has some farmers filled with hope. Michaux and Mitchell would be quite surprised to find the livestock that graze the green pastures of Apple Hill Farm. Crowning a gently rounded mountain between Banner Elk and Valle Crucis, this old apple orchard has entered a new incarnation as a farm "where animals speak and people listen." Farmer Lee Rankin developed this motto to celebrate the alpacas that make this idyllic spot their home.

Far from their native homes of Peru, Bolivia, and Chile, alpacas have found Appalachia a pleasant home. With twenty of the beautiful camelids and more on the way, Lee and her assistant Kathleen Kelly see a bright future for this new face in the fields.

"Either you can go the fiber route or the breeding route," said Lee, as she watched the mothers and their youngsters. "Potentially there is more money in breeding. Alpacas have been in this country for twenty years, and the market is still holding pretty steady. The fact that there is a secondary market in fiber might make it endure."

Alpaca fiber is generally agreed to be one of Earth's finest natural materials and continues to command high prices in both finished product and skeins. And, as I quickly learned, we don't call it wool. Alpaca folks don't want to confuse consumers. Wool comes from sheep; finer fiber comes from alpacas.

"I sold five thousand dollars worth of alpaca stuff at the Valle Fair," said Lee as she walked into her fiber room where she keeps her skirting table, triangular loom, and other pieces of equipment for working the fiber from her alpacas. "We charge twenty-seven dollars a skein or thirty-two dollars for four ounces."

With her small twenty-head flock, Lee cannot produce enough of her own fiber to make a commercial amount of finished goods, but she belongs to a cooperative that takes her raw material in exchange for socks, scarves, and other marketable items. "We skirt our fiber. We sort our fiber and then sell it to a co-op. For every pound of fiber we send, we get a credit for finished products," said Lee, walking over to the skirting table.

Alpaca keepers have organized strongly. First, Alpaca Registry, Incorporated, created in 1988, has a database that keeps track of all registered alpacas in the United States, as well as Canada and other foreign countries. Using sophisticated DNA technology, "ARI validates the parentage of alpacas submitted for pedigree registration," according to the organization's website, www.alpacaregistry.net. The registry protects the gene pool, maintains a list of animals owned and sold, and documents the lineage of all registered animals. Closed to imports since 1998, the registry also encourages quality control of alpacas and prevents unlimited speculation by discouraging importation. Another organization is the Greater Appalachian Llama and Alpaca Association, with members across the nation but primarily in the mountains from Maine to Virginia. The Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association also helps promote the animals.

"The ARI held imports to five standards, and then after the breeding stock was established, said that no longer can Alpacas

brought from outside get into the registry," said Lee. "That keeps the value of the animals high. Also the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association heavily markets Alpacas throughout the country."

To take full advantage of the alpaca wave, she and Kathleen continue to learn and refine their fiber-working skills. They have set up the skirting table for cleaning and sorting the sheared material. This day they had a large "blanket" of fiber.

"The first cut through around the barrel forms the blanket," said Kathleen, as Lee removed the screen that covered the blanket, sandwiched between two screens for cleaning. "The crimp is what you look for," Kathleen explained, sliding her fingers under a fluffy curl of the fine white fiber. "That's the sign of quality fiber."

Dirt seldom penetrates much below the surface, so the skirting table, that flips over, allows the women to pick the blanket clean. "You do not want to use hot water or to agitate the fiber to clean it or it will felt. You just dunk and let everything drip out," said Kathleen, rubbing her hand gently over the surface. "This is Sunnig's fiber; she makes very nice fiber and very nice babies."

Next she and Lee demonstrate their drum carder, a small machine that works on the same concept of the paddle carders familiar to Appalachian women for generations. The spikes align the fiber in the same direction

whether the weaver uses paddles or the drum; however, the latter makes longer rovings and is faster. Once the roving is ready, the worker can either felt the material or spin it into yarn. Felting condenses the fiber to make a strong cloth.

Wet felting involves using hot water and mild soap and agitating the fiber; a less complicated way that Lee demonstrated is needle-felting. She placed two clumps of fiber perpendicular to each other on a large round sponge then took a rounded handle, like a pull on a dresser, that had a number of long, sharp, barbed needles with the business ends poking out. With an up-and-down motion she repeatedly stabbed the fiber, which melded together to form a thin, strong felt.

As Kathleen watched, she told how she made a pair of boots in a craft class once by needle-felting and putting together the pieces. The process is simple and requires little equipment.

Working with the triangular loom is similarly easy and inexpensive. The loom is literally a triangle with nails studding the edges for looping the yarn. Unlike traditional mountain looms that require extensive training to learn to operate and much time to set up for weaving, the triangular loom allows the weaver to use one looped strand of yarn to work on the warp and the weft at the same time.

As Lee stood at the loom that was as wide as her outspread arms and as long as from her head to her knees, she demonstrated the technique of interweaving the double strand through the horizontal warp, then hooking the thread over the side nails so the same strand that formed the vertical weft became part of the warp. She said, "This is a very inexpensive way to get involved in weaving without investing in an expensive loom or having to take hours of instruction. I took a two- or three-hour class and knew how to do it when I left."

One of the benefits of using alpaca fiber is that there is much color variation naturally.

"Alpacas come in twenty-two different colors," said Lee, holding out a rich brown yarn.

Kathleen added, "Twenty-two natural colors. You don't have to dye to get variety. We get a lot of unique colors, naturally."

Lee explained how the golden baby, Cuervo, came from breeding the snow white Margarita to a dark brown male. Last year, that combination created a light brown cria. July Moon, a young pregnant

Photograph courtesy Michael Joslin.

female, is a rose gray, while the young Black Boy is, of course, black.

Lee maintains a small retail store in the top of one of her barns. Here she sells a variety of alpaca products from warm socks, scarves, and hats to felted dolls. She also has a retail outlet of alpaca products in the Great Train Robbery emporium in Banner Elk, where she does a good business.

So far, her greatest economic success has come through her breeding program. She has sold a pregnant two-year-old female for twenty-five thousand dollars and a six-month-old weanling for eighty-five hundred. Apple Hill Farm also serves as an educational center, hosting classes, tour groups, and clinics.

"Right now our educational program is focused on animals and knowledge about animals. We've had shearing clinics and alpaca handling clinics. We are talking with the agricultural office about developing ag-tourism," said Lee.

Holding the incredibly soft, richly brown Bambi in her arms, Lee smiled. Her blue eyes sparkled in the morning sun. "Dreaming the life," she said, living a vision that is far older than she knows. ❖

Michael Joslin lives with his wife, Pam, on a farm in the Buladean community of Mitchell County, North Carolina. Through photography and stories, he celebrates the wildness, beauty, and values of Appalachian nature and culture. He is a professor at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina.

EASTER HATS

By Connie Jordan Green

Oak Ridge, Tennessee, built for the war effort,
was too casual for hats, a place of mud, long lines,
gaseous diffusion, uranium enrichment,
my father hatless on the bus, Mother's hair
bunched with a red ribbon, my older sister and I,
lank hair on our shoulders, younger sister's
curls like a halo. For Easter, Mother bought us hats,
straw boats to ride the waves of our pincurled locks,
fake flowers urging the season forward. Gloves,
patent-leather shoes, frilly dresses—for one
Sunday morning we were children from pages
of the Sears-Roebuck catalog, hats the ticket
transporting us to a world without war or rations,
a world where children paraded in their finery,
where parents' heads no longer bowed to necessity.

Connie Jordan Green lives on a farm in Loudon County, Tennessee. She has authored two novels for young people, and her poetry has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. She writes a weekly column for the *Loudon County News Herald*.

HOPE FRAZIER:

REMEMBERING THE ART OF BRUSHY

By Robert Sorrell

Withered, beaten, and raw, the apple in the sepia-toned photograph seems to have lost to the tests of time. Another photograph though, beacons a dawn of hope. It is of a young girl wearing a white spring dress, as she shyly turns for the photographer. Both images are meant to tell a story in the microcosm of communities and mountains across Appalachia under siege from human exploitation of the area's chief natural resource, coal. Hope Frazier, who passed away in early 2008, used her talents—photography, poetry, and filmmaking—to tell the story of Brushy, Kentucky, and of the central Appalachian Mountains.

Frazier died in January of 2008 at the age of sixty, as the Brushy project took flight in the environmental and art worlds. The former newspaper editor devoted many of her latter days to Brushy, where she witnessed the impact of mountaintop-removal coal mining throughout her life. "When I visited my brother during his final years, I saw the effects on Ford Mountain, on Brushy Creek, on the people, their health, their homes," she said in the spring of 2007. "I first made photographs and then took former National Geographic cinematographer Kevin Peer with me to film. After a close family friend who was a miner died, I started writing poems. The work is very personal."

In 1999, with her cameras in hand, she began to capture the story of this mountain community, stricken cold by the effects of coal mining.

The result became her final project, an intimate, multimedia exhibition called *BRUSHY: Between the Halves of My Heart*. It combined poetry, photography, solar etching, and video installations that Frazier called film poems. She believed the exhibit, which premiered in March 2007 at East Tennessee State University's Reece Museum, to be the only individual artist's expression of Appalachia in poetry, film poems, etchings, and a book.

"The Brushy project is a way for me to artistically express sorrow for what I see happening to the mountains and also admiration for the people," Frazier said of her final project.

Frazier, born in Kingsport, Tennessee, worked and lived in Ojai, California, and had family living in Brushy. The residents of this area live along two forks of Brushy Creek, with Ford Mountain rising above them. "My father used to tell me about crossing Ford Mountain in the 1920s as a young

Hope Frazier. Photo courtesy Frazier family.

man," she said of her ties with the community. "He helped bring the first electric lines to the mines and the railroads in the area."

Her father, Clarence Cullop, met his first wife at Brushy (his second wife was Frazier's mother). "An important branch of our family tree sprouted," she said. "I've had family in Brushy ever since."

Her visits in recent years were infrequent, but each time she returned she saw that mining coal by leveling the tops of mountains costs the Appalachians dearly and harms one of the most biologically diverse ranges in the world. Mountaintop-removal mining is less labor intensive, substantially cutting jobs. Behemoth machines clear-cut native forests, blasting away up to 1,000 feet of mountaintop, trucking away the coal, and then pushing the remaining rocks and earth into nearby valleys, often burying streams. A 2003 report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cited a loss of 800 square miles of mountains, more than seven percent of forests, and 1,200 miles of streams. It projected a loss of 1.4 million acres and accompanying severe damage to wildlife species and human communities within the decade.

Along with the photographs made into solar etchings and the two film poems, Frazier also created a book of poetry that contained solar etchings and photographs. Among those to whom she dedicated the book is a twenty-seven-year-old Brushy man who died of cancer. "The reason I got interested in doing art about Brushy was that so many people there were seriously ill or had died," she said.

Artistically, she captured the spirit of life through people and nature. "Most everything I do artistically has some relationship to my bonding with the natural world and to my strong sense of place," she commented.

Frazier's subjects range from a snaggled profile of Ford Mountain under siege, to a portrait of a suffering miner, to bird tracks in mining silt, entitled *The Only Tracks I Saw.*

In *Highway Slice*, she photographed a place where a highway was cut through a mountain near Brushy. Her photograph is a poetic look at the value of a mountain from the trees and topsoil on top to the seams of coal slicing through it. One of the film poems expressed her feelings after her first trip to see the blasting at Ford Mountain as well as the other flattened mountains in Central Appalachia.

Back in the mountain town and artists' enclave of Ojai, in California's Ventura County, Frazier transformed her photographs into powerful solar etchings. The outcome of this procedure is a vivid image rendered evocative of its mountain origins by sepia-toned etching links and tactile fine-art papers. "I found solar etching, as an alternative energy process, to be perfect for this work," she said. "The sun etches the black-and-white photographic image onto a simple plate that I can wash with water, allow to harden in the sun, and then make beautiful prints on my vintage hand press."

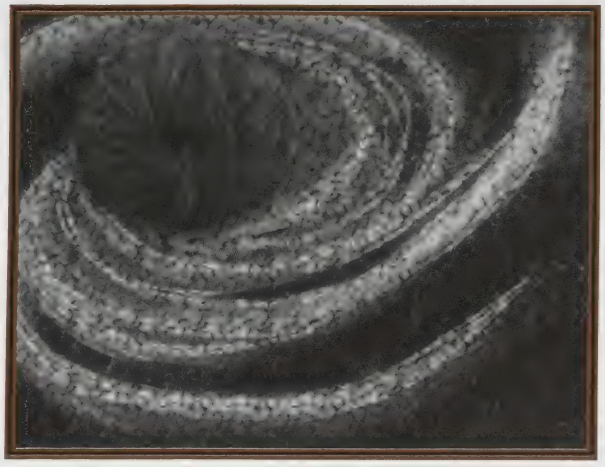
Her poems were inspired by these etched portraits of despair. For an image called *Mountain Angle*, she described her situation and what she was doing: "It is from my first mountain home/ my sorrow flows angry/ my love fierce/ It is about the people/ my people/ in these original mountains/ I am coming to you with a story/ I am coming to show/ to sing. . . . "

Frazier, who worked for newspapers in Miami and Los Angeles, used *BRUSHY: Between the Halves of My Heart* to interpret what is happening in the world or, more realistically, what is happening to the world. Prior to her death she said, "I often find myself looking through the lens of history. Today [in Brushy] Ford's top has been sacrificed to coal mining, and as I grieve for that loss, I question my own gluttony for electricity and all that it fuels in my life." ❖

Robert Sorrell writes for several regional and national publications on the topics of homes, history, art, and travel from his home in Greeneville, Tennessee. He is currently a staff writer for the *Erwin Record* newspaper.

ARADELLA'S YARN

By Barbara Knott



The girl puts down the coal scuttle and runs to the creek. She finds a shoal where the clear water strikes the round rocks and glides across them before it glances off a boulder and swirls back into the deep. Lying on the bank, she dips her elbows into the water and rests her chin in her palms. Though she is very young, lying beside the cavemouth, her face belongs to no age in particular.

She turns, and there inside the cave lit by a slanted ray of sunlight sits her muse, weaving thread from a basket of skeins dyed with all the colors of the landscape in which the girl has spent her life. The Weaver knows the world all at once. Her tapestry reveals to the girl the color of her world, image by image.

The Dark Shining One wears a soft gray gauzy dress, loosely girdled in red. It falls to the ground around her three-legged stool. Small creatures climb upon her garment. A dragonfly with pewter-colored wings lights in her hair, which has taken the color of the iron ore in the soil. Into her white hands, small and longfingered, she takes thread that the girl has spun.

She begins with gray, favored by nature for the heaviest things like granite and marble and for the lightest like the feathers of the barn owl. Gravel and macadam and tin, stubble in winter fields, winter tree trunks and branches, overcast sky, the world at twilight and dawn. Charcoal and slate. Rain, fog. Oatmeal. Steam, smoke. Lichen and dry moss. Opossums. Wolves. Granny's hair. Ghosts, the color of the barely visible as it appears and disappears.

She fashions guinea hens from black and white dots and flecks that from a distance look gray. With her clever fingers she makes a white church on a dark winter night, columnar black figures against the white walls lit by kerosene lanterns. She furnishes Granny's house with a black cast iron stove, a kettle and a frying pan, white cotton tatting and crocheting.

Human hair as blueblack as a crow's feathers. A crow, attendant on death, sometimes beside the road or in the woods where animals fall, sometimes in a town, dressed in the black suit of the funeral officiary. A black wedding dress (her mother's).

Black cars. Tar. Old photographs. Ink on paper. Glossy dark figures in a field of white cotton. Lily Foster standing, white bandanna tied around her dark skin. She gazes across the field at what is invisible to the white girl who measures her small sack that barely touches the ground against the six feet or more of bag dragging half full of cotton behind Lily.

Black ballerina slippers. Moonlight in a black night. A snake, a black racer. Cigarette papers. Magnolias and gardenias. Milk, butter, meringue, coconut. Snow and snowdrops. Loretta's black hair. Bernice's hair.

The Weaver makes skin from a spectrum of nearly white to dark brown. The hair of horses and many other animals—dogs, possums, panthers. Brown eggs and earth and excrement. Tree bark, haystacks, nuts, sweet potatoes, cracklins, cloves, pine cones, coffee, chocolate, birds' nests. Snuff. Aradella's hair. Shoes made of brown hides of cattle.

Illustration by Sam Crowe.

The girl laughs at the notion of wearing cows on her feet. The Lady laughs with her.

Brown brightens to orange when the leaves turn and the pumpkin appears beside the green gourd. The sulphur tips of matches. Bonfires. Bonded whiskey. Rusty metal roofs on half-fallen barns. Iron ore. Clay. Banjos and bread bowls, clothes pins and thingamajigs.

Yellow works upon the brown to make fields the color of nutmeg and cinnamon. Yellow awakens the jonquil and the daffodil in winter, buds the forsythia in early spring, opens the blossoms of scotch broom and later the marigold and mum, the blackeyed Susan and dandelion. Bitterweed in bloom: Oh, woe for the taste of cow's milk!

All these the Weaver spreads among the fields and yards in their season, along with squash and corn. She fires the pine knots that light the way for settlers moving through the night. Upon a table: a block of hoop cheese beside a plate of corn muffins and a small bowl of lemons lit by sunlight streaming through a window which also touches the floor and picks out a pair of mustard colored brogans left standing in a corner.

She adds school buses and pencils and butterflies and bees and gold earrings.

Then she greens the tapestry, from light green willow leaves that come and go seasonally to dark cedar, evergreen like the ivy and the pine. She unfurls ferns along the mossy green banks of Panther Creek, grows the sweet shrub, the crabapple, chinaberry, and wild ginger with little piggies underground. Green peanut vines. Maypops. She touches the necks of Mallard ducks, the tails of peacocks, the wings of dragonflies and June bugs and outhouse flies. And underneath the toilet seat, she puts a giant green frog. She pauses to make a cat's eyes, then Aradella's eyes, olive green.

With blue she paints china cups in Granny's cupboard, dyes denim and chambray. Blue jays, hydrangeas, hyacinths, asters. Smoke on the mountain. Bernice's eyes and Ben's eyes, like robins' eggs.

Purple reveals wisteria and lilacs, irises, thistle blossoms, clover, dogs' tongues, mist on the mountain, box cars. Jawbreakers and jellybeans, Easter eggs. Queen Esther's royal sleeves. Passion cloth for Jesus, muscadines and scuppernongs, grapes for the wilderness god.

The girl watches as her Lady with deft fingers weaves red into a winter woods: a cardinal appears suddenly in a tree. Her hands move to the image of a backyard clothes line hung with dark trousers and boiled white shirts. There! One among them is now red. A pair of red shoes on dancing feet.

Her hands move faster. Pyracantha berries and red glass balls on a green Christmas tree. Seeded pods of sumac. A red wagon with a boy in it. The glowing tips of British soldier moss. Then a drop of red blood on the ruffed neck of a white rooster. Blood flowering on a man's shirt. A red rag blowing across a highway. Here and there, a red rose. Loom looming, blood blooming. Red tinges white skin to make rosy cheeks and blushing ears and nipples and tongues and nail polish and lipstick and pomgrannies and wild roses and dawn. Moving forward on her stool, the Lady scans the warp and picks another point of entry. There! Her dainty nails flash white tips over the yarn. The girl recognizes from the emerging pattern a woman's long tresses, the color of allspice, curling back upon themselves like water when breaking on a seashore. ❖

Barbara Knott is host of *The Grapevine Art & Soul Salon*, a literary/art online journal at www.barbaraknott.net. She holds a Ph.D. from New York University. *Aradella's Yarn* is excerpted from her unpublished novel *Muscadine*.

A PIECE OF CLOTH

By Randy Sanders

Jess was just a boy—an unremarkable boy really, except for that one person who told him otherwise. She was his warrior, his champion. When they were in public, small glances in their direction made him proud. Who, he wondered, would not want such a grandmother—a woman of size and appetite with the seismic grace of planets?

It was she who taught him to love Jesus. He understood Jesus, then. Those summer days, as he and his grandmother walked home from Vacation Bible School, were filled with Jesus' love for them: Jesus of the June bug on a string; Jesus of the aluminum tumbler; Jesus of the GE fan. That was long before Jesus grew up and bought a dark green Suburban.

It was Friday, the final day of Bible School. Jess took his natural place at the right hand of his grandmother, who taught the class.

"Let us bow our heads in prayer," she said. "Heavenly Father . . ."

He looked at the circle of four boys and three girls. They looked like piglets roasted by the sun—all except Ann Marie, who returned his gaze. She was a bar of Ivory soap wrapped in wheat. He averted her gaze by rediscovering convenient piety.

"In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Without thought for the consequences of an evil tongue, he said, "Grandma, Ann Marie had her eyes open."

"And how do you know that, Jess?"

It was a devastatingly simple question, learned no doubt from his grandmother's other hero, Perry Mason. The jury of piglets grinned. They knew that he who thought he was without sin had cast a stone. It was not quite a frozen moment, considering they were in a basement without air conditioning in the middle of June, but it certainly felt like a moment that would never end.

"How do you know that, Jess?"

He longed for an answer—a good answer—an answer that would wipe the smirks from the piglets' faces. A quick inventory of every *Perry Mason* show he had ever watched with her yielded nothing. With a new fascination for Baptist church linoleum, he whispered, "Never mind."

It was a miracle. Never in his life had "Never mind" worked. It was as if his grandmother, hypnotized by his voice, forgot her question and started the carefully planned lesson. Slowly, Jess regained control of his neck muscles.

The singing of *This Little Light of Mine* was their cue that the Bible School sacrament of cupcakes and grape Kool-Aid was at hand. As the class filed around the accordion door that separated their room from the fellowship hall, Jess stayed behind to help his grandmother straighten the room.

"Go on, Jess. I'll do this," she said.

He recognized a different tone in her voice—a warning tone. He quickly left the room.

The fellowship hall was filled with the happy sounds of freed children. Jess walked to the far

Illustration by Samuel Crowe.

end of the hall where a small herd of good women hovered near the snack table. Taking a cupcake and Kool-Aid, he sat down at a table with two older girls. Like so much in his young life, it was a calculated move. He knew these older girls, already engrossed in the serious talk of serious boys, would leave him alone.

"Why did you tell on me?" she asked.

Great—without looking up, he knew who stood beside him. Before he could answer, Ann Marie sat down beside him.

"You didn't have to do that, you know? You were looking around, just like me."

"I know," Jess said.

"Then why did you do it?"

"Look, I'm sorry, alright?"

There was not a bit of contrition in his voice. Instead, it was now his voice that offered a warning tone—a tone that seethed with the delicious desire to cram a cupcake into her face.

"You're not a very nice boy, Jess."

The mile-long walk home was, literally, downhill. Jess told his grandmother, again, that when he grew up he would park a trailer next to her house. He could just see it—an Airstream gliding into the port that was her patch of earth. He knew she loved to hear him describe his quirky vision by asking, "And how will you decorate your trailer?" as if the question were a misplaced memory. That was his cue to tell her about how he would decorate the inside like a Japanese tearoom—a telling followed by her hearty laughter. He looked up at her, expectantly.

He finally asked, "Do you want to know how I'll fix the inside?"

"No, Jess. I remember how you plan to fix the inside." There it was—that tone.

"But while we're asking questions, you have not answered the question I asked you this morning."

"What question?" he asked.

"You know very well what question, Jess. How did you know Ann Marie had her eyes open during prayer?"

She gently took his arm and turned him to face her. He looked up. Her face, covered in perspiration, blotted the sun. The world suddenly seemed like a pit of a place—hot, sticky asphalt held him in place for Jesus' impending judgment. He twisted to free himself, but she took his other arm. Where was the Jesus of lambs and little children now? As he shook, he felt her perspiration dripping onto his face. He started to cry.

"Let me go, you witch!"

He tore the pocket from her dress, and in her moment of disbelief that this was her grandson, she released him. He ran like there was a desert wind carrying him away from her.

As he rounded the bend in the road, he slowed to look back. There she was, sprawled like a continent in the shade of a tree just off the road. Her head was buried in a crossed arm that anchored her to the earth. He knew she was crying. He knew her heart was broken, and he hated himself for it. There would be no thirst-quenching aluminum tumblers of lemonade on this day.

Many years later, in his diary, he wrote:

> Much is made of innocence lost, as though, day-by-day, and piece-by-piece, the fabric of our misshaped lives unravels from the baby blanket we were. There is, however, another way to look at innocence—a fundamental way—to see innocence as the general lack of guilt in the face of sin.
>
> I remember the day I first lost that kind of innocence. I see her crumpled on dark green grass in the shade of a tree, and like all memories of consequence, I hold the image close.
>
> On the day of her funeral, before we closed the casket, I pulled something from my suit coat and placed it in her crossed hands. To my family, it looked like a handkerchief. But my grandmother knew I was returning a piece of cloth she had reluctantly given me, long ago, on a hot summer's day. ❖

Randy Sanders is managing editor of *Now & Then*.

HERE AND QUEER

By Jeff Mann

John and I are having a few rooms in our house painted, here in Pulaski, Virginia. For several days now, two young guys have been showing up every morning, working on the basement, then the living room, now the bedroom. They're friendly, fast, and efficient; I can tell from their good manners and their accents that they're Southwest Virginia natives like me. They're both handsome. I enjoy looking at them: burly, bearded, tattooed Jim and lean, buff, clean-shaven Mike. I assume that they understand what kind of household this is, two men in their forties sharing a home, sharing a master bedroom. "We're really, really sorry we have to leave you guys' bedroom in such a mess," Jim said yesterday, at day's end. We explained that it was no problem, that we'd just use the guest bedroom. Thus it's clear to me that it's clear to them that John and I sleep together. And I haven't exactly bent over backward to hide incriminating material. My latest reading material, *Gay Warrior*, by F. Jim Fickey and Gary S. Grimm, is in full view on the coffee table. *Growing up Gay in the South*, *Gay Spirit*, *Love Between Men*, and *Betty and Pansy's Severe Queer Review of San Francisco* sit on the bookshelves our sexy painters pass every time they leave the house for more supplies. All that, plus there's a Tim McGraw calendar hanging in the sunroom. This month, June 2008, Tim's showing off quite a bit of chest hair via his half-unbuttoned shirt.

Are they surprised to find two gay men living together in this small Appalachian town? Many folks would. Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender people have rarely been considered in discussions of Appalachian life. No one really knows what percentage of Americans are LGBT; the numbers vary according to the researcher. Three percent, six percent, ten percent? Go with the lowest estimate, three percent. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission, the population of the region is about twenty-three million people. Three percent of twenty-three million is 690,000. That's a lot of queers.

Yes, quite a few gays and lesbians leave the mountains. Conservative attitudes and religious intolerance encourage LGBT out-migration in the same way that economic hardships drive folks of all sexual orientations from the region. For instance, most of the gay and lesbian friends I made during my college days at West Virginia University now live in big cities beyond Appalachia—Baltimore, Maryland; Cincinnati, Ohio; Berkeley, California;

Jeff Mann. Photograph courtesy author.

and Washington, D.C.—all places where gay life is more open and active. But many of us remain, or leave and then return, making up the fabric of Appalachian cities and small towns.

Hill-queers are as Appalachian as any other mountain-bred individuals. I'm a representative example. When I first read Loyal Jones' well-known essay *Appalachian Values*, that litany of regional characteristics, all I could say was, "Yep, yep, yep...," recognizing such traits in myself and in my upbringing (though I do have a problem with "Religion," since fundamentalist Christianity

I love country music. (Less conventional, admittedly, is my infatuation with Tim McGraw.)

is responsible for much of American homophobia, and "Modesty," since we writers tend toward the egotistical). Like most hill-folks, when I leave the mountains, I miss them. Like most hill-folks, I pride myself on my manners, self-reliance, and hospitality. My students at Virginia Tech have gently pointed out the way I fit certain Appalachian stereotypes: I have a passion for pickup trucks, I wear cowboy boots and baseball caps, I love country music. (Less conventional, admittedly, is my infatuation with Tim McGraw.) When I am stressed, I put on a pot of pinto beans, open a can of chowchow, heat up the cast iron skillet, plop in a few tablespoons of bacon grease (carefully hoarded in a tin), and mix up cornbread batter.

I am many other things, true. My country/mountain side is only one of several. In this context, I think of the late Rita Riddle, who said, in *Her Words: Diverse Voices in Contemporary Appalachian Women's Poetry*, "there is no such thing as 'or.' Everything in the world, so far as I know, is 'and, and, and.'" In other words, I can read Ovid and quietly admire the handsome painters and play the mountain dulcimer and publish gay erotica and make piecrust and study Wicca and lift weights. Rita Riddle again: "I don't want to cull anything, cast out anything. I don't want to reduce Appalachia to a narrow little alley that doesn't allow me the depth and breadth of everything else that I am." This seems to me a very intelligent approach. Why should I diminish my natural complexity in order to fit society's expectations, regional stereotypes, and simplistic pigeonholes? The same man who detests the modern abomination of mountaintop removal relishes goateed, hairy country boys in worn jeans and scuffed boots. The same man who hankers regularly for mountain tidbits like fried apple pies and ramps watches *Queer as Folk* DVDs at day's end and is going on a gay cruise of the Mediterranean in less than a month. The same man who relishes violent action movies (especially those involving bearded, half-naked warriors swinging swords) admires the delicate wordplay of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

"We are everywhere" is a slogan often used by the gay rights movement. It is accurate. I have spent my entire life in Appalachia, other than brief vacations beyond the region, and I have never suffered for want of queer company. I had several supportive lesbian friends during my high school days in my hometown of Hinton, West Virginia. I had many gay and lesbian friends during my undergrad and grad years at West Virginia University. Now I have a goodly number of queer compatriots in Blacksburg, Virginia, home of Virginia Tech, where I teach creative writing.

Despite this lucky history, I was a little nervous moving in July 2005 from liberal and culturally diverse Blacksburg to Pulaski, a small mountain town a good bit like Hinton. John joined me there in April 2006, putting his house in Charleston, West Virginia, on the market. We wondered if we'd run into any gay folks in Pulaski. John and I are so busy, and we so cherish our quiet time that we don't do much socializing. Like many settled couples, our idea of a good evening is a few drinks, a home-cooked meal, and a Netflix DVD. (How's that for a sinister gay agenda?) But we did hope there would be a few other LGBT folks around, just so we wouldn't feel entirely out of place and

isolated. We shouldn't have worried. We've met and socialized with four other male couples, and there are others we've heard of and haven't met. Some are open, some aren't. All are from this area and have no intentions of leaving. Like John and me, they enjoy the quiet atmosphere, friendliness, slow pace, and gorgeous countryside of Appalachian Virginia.

When it comes to small-town or rural living, it helps to be coupled and of an age when one's identity is solid, one's libido is no longer raging, and gay nightlife is no longer appealing. My guess is that queer youths in the mountains are as restless for entertainment options as their straight counterparts. At least they have the Internet, an option lacking in my lonely single years, to help them feel less alone.

We LGBT Appalachians who remain in our native region do so despite the hostility we often find here. Life is still miserable for many queer high-school kids, who have few defenses and fewer protectors. In the Mountain South—and, indeed, all over America—homophobic behavior ranging from verbal to violent occurs all the time, aimed most especially at the young and slight. (Most homophobes have the sense to leave burly, hot-tempered bears like me alone.) Such nastiness isn't limited to small, isolated towns. It even appears at liberal Virginia Tech. One of my favorite gay students transferred to Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond because he was tired of being called "Faggot!" every time he walked through the student union.

Again and again, the Bible is invoked to excuse prejudice and encourage hate. After living all these years in Appalachia and hearing Leviticus and Romans regularly thrown around, I've come to respond to Christian imagery the way Black folks are likely to respond to pointy white hoods. When I grab lunch at the little diner down the hill from us in Pulaski, I do so despite all the crocheted crosses and framed Bible verses on the walls. The servers are super-friendly, the food is cheap, tasty, down-home . . . but part of me is very nervous, as if in the presence of foes. I know many Christians are kind, compassionate people, but it seems to me they are in the minority when it comes to the battle over LGBT rights. I know that equating Christianity with homophobia is a paranoid generalization, an irrational prejudice. Still, the frightened little queer kid in me is always relieved to leave that restaurant. If he had his druthers (and a lot more money), he'd move back to Blacksburg. There are too many churches in Pulaski, too many fundamentalist bumper stickers and what I call "Jesus fish." We even have a bright pink "Prayer Infirmary." The ubiquitous presence of Christianity sometimes makes me feel as if I have stupidly chosen to pitch camp behind enemy lines, in a dangerous foreign country.

I'm as much a part of these mountains as the pious and the narrow-minded.

On a wider level, homophobia, institutionalized, infuses national and regional politics. In November 2006, Virginia passed a particularly virulent constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Thus my partner John and I have no legal status as a couple, despite our eleven years together. I have no real interest in marriage as an institution, but the tax and insurance benefits would be damned nice. If I were in a serious accident, John might be denied access to my hospital room. We are not, after all, relatives. I will never forget Charlotte, a lesbian I knew who used to sell her leatherwork at Pipestem State Park in the 1970s. One night her car was hit head-on by a drunk driver. Medical personnel wouldn't allow her lover of many years to see her. She died alone.

This unwelcoming atmosphere has caused some gay and lesbian folks to flee. Not me. This is my home. I'm as much a part of these mountains as the pious and the narrow-minded. The scared child inside me might want to run away. Not the prideful

adult. I'm not leaving, and neither are most other gay and lesbian Appalachians. We mountaineers are notoriously devoted to our homeland; leaving goes against our nature. Plus many of us have inherited Scottish and Irish blood, and supposedly that Celtic disposition makes us prone to fight. Why live in a cozy gay ghetto in a faraway city when our native region needs changing for the better? The days of queer self-hatred and passivity are fading fast.

I'll miss the painters when they leave, at the same time that I'll be glad to get the house in order again after weeks of remodeling chaos. I've enjoyed looking at them, because I'm a gay man. I've enjoyed shooting the breeze with them, on topics ranging from tattoos (turns out Jim and I share the same tattoo artist) to down-home cooking (Mike's mother makes a good red velvet cake with cream cheese icing), because I'm an aging country boy who enjoys the easy camaraderie of other country boys. Here's hoping the painters leave with a somewhat expanded sense of what gay men can be like, if they didn't already possess that knowledge. The more open LGBT people are, the more everyone else will realize how much we share with the heterosexual majority. Like straight people, most of us make good friends, coworkers, and neighbors.

To adapt another oft-used gay rights slogan, "We're here, we're queers, we're mountaineers, get used to it." If you've read this far, I'm guessing you're already used to it. Perhaps you have an LGBT sibling or relative or acquaintance; perhaps you're gay yourself. If you're not used to it, you'd better try to be. We are everywhere, we're tired of being treated like second-class citizens, in Appalachia and across the country, and we will have our rights. See how far we've come since the 1969 Stonewall Riots, where the movement for gay liberation was born? Now imagine how far we'll go in the next forty years. ❖

Jeff Mann has published two volumes of poetry, *Bones Washed with Wine* and *On the Tongue*; a collection of memoir and poetry, *Loving Mountains, Loving Men*; and a volume of short fiction, *A History of Barbed Wire*, winner of a Lambda Literary Award. He teaches at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia.

FREEING FAMILIES:

NON-PROFITS IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE HELP FAMILIES FIGHT CYCLE OF RECIDIVISM

By Matthew Schacht

Locking up criminals is a time-honored, politically popular, all-purpose solution to America's crime problem. Yet no matter how many offenders we lock up, except for a handful of "lifers," incarceration comes to an end—and then what? Approximately half of all released Tennessee felons will simply commit another crime and then become re-incarcerated. The resulting cost of recidivism is enormous—between $25,000 and $40,000 per prisoner per year. Yet the cost is even greater to families who lose children and parents. Though we have no numbers to represent that price, we cite statistics and try to convey it. And then what do we do, when the time-honored, politically popular, all-purpose solution we know has become a problem? We come up with something different and try to fix the solution as best we can.

The Prison Problem

Whatever its virtues as a method for limiting crime, imprisonment of criminals who are also parents leads to wrecked families. For reasons we do not entirely understand, losing a parent to incarceration affects a child differently than if that parent died. In statistical data we can measure the effect: It is estimated that seven out of ten children with an incarcerated parent will end up imprisoned themselves. When children follow their parents into jail or prison, they set in motion a cycle of generational incarceration that prison confinement simply is not resolving. As a result, explains Washington County, Tennessee, Parole Officer Sue Tester, entire families are sucked into the corrections system. "I have a family where I have had four of the sons on parole. Some of them [I've had] more than once. Then we have had husbands and wives . . . the father and the son [all on parole]."

Eventually, after generations of incarceration within families, the average age of inmates in the entire system drops, since more and younger offspring are themselves brought into custody. Major Gary Bradley, an officer of thirty years and a supervisor at the Washington County Jail, has observed this demographic shift in the population of his jail. "[Over the last thirty years] the average age of an inmate in the [Washington County] jail was the late forties. The average age now of

Families reunited, Forgiven Ministries' God Camp event, Northeast Correctional Complex in Mountain City. Photo courtesy author.

somebody incarcerated in this jail is twenty-three."

This fact troubles prison minister David Lovelace, who works with Good Samaritan ministries in northeast Tennessee. Lovelace explains that "the younger they are when incarcerated the worse it is . . . because they never experience what it is like to be an adult on the outside." Consequently, Lovelace notes, when offenders who were incarcerated young are released, they do not have the coping skills to live in the free world. "In some ways, they're a lot like children," he observes. "They recidivate easily, some have children, and the cycle repeats."

Now the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.

When faced with a vicious cycle, one logical solution is to step back and re-think basic premises. Observing the limits of incarceration as an intervention strategy, Major Bradley suggests that if children of incarcerated parents could be helped before they crossed the line—if "someone [would] have intervened and taught them a little bit of accountability and responsibility"—then their own subsequent incarceration might be avoided.

Yet we continue incarcerating criminals, and if we are stepping back, it is not far enough. Now the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world. With one out of every hundred adults behind bars, we really have to wonder: If incarceration is causing a problem it is meant to resolve, why do we continue to rely on it as a primary solution to crime?

In two words: politics and business.

In his 2006 election campaign, Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee declared that "the best way to stop crime is to capture and imprison criminals—not to impose new burdens on law-abiding citizens." However, in his support for incarceration as a method to reduce crime, Corker did not address the predictably destructive effects of incarceration on families, nor did he discuss alternative methods for reducing crime.

In 2006, Tennessee's corrections budget increased eleven percent compared to the previous year. The increase represented millions of dollars. Currently a significant portion of the state corrections budget goes to Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), a private, for-profit prison contractor that operates three of Tennessee's prisons. Consequently, CCA has become an appealing investment for stockbrokers, reports the *International Herald Tribune*, because of its guaranteed and "growing cash flow," some of which is then recycled as campaign contributions to law-and-order politicians, including Corker, who received at least $8,000 from CCA and its affiliates in the past three years.

Political and economic forces appear to be at work, an idea that finds support in, among other places, a 2002 study by Tracy Huling on prison growth. Huling concludes that these powers "have become a major force driving criminal justice policy toward mass incarceration."

In northeast Tennessee, where the deleterious effects of incarceration have become apparent, people are acting to interrupt incarcerational cycles where they begin, with the families.

Helping Families

One proposed solution to the generational cycle of incarceration may be seen in action on visitors day at Northeast Correctional Complex in Mountain City, Tennessee. Prisoners and their families play board games and engage in art projects—activities commonplace in the free world but not in a prison, where even items such as metal pieces from the board game Monopoly are contraband.

Discussing the limitations of a family visit in prison, Melissa Neal explains, "It's really difficult for them to get through security if they are trying to bring a whole lot of extra stuff." Neal is a twenty-something doctoral student in public health at East Tennessee State University and co-founder of the non-profit Families Free, which operates the recreation room where prisoners and families occupy themselves with games and art.

Neal's goal of helping prisoners bond with their families is widely recognized as a method of interrupting cyclical incarceration.

Indeed, it is listed as a "key component of effective prisoner reentry" in a recent report by the U.S. Department of Justice, and it is reported as a solution that "could help break the cycle of incarceration" in a 1995 presentation by the Children of Incarcerated Parents Project.

Families Free is able to offer this service only with volunteers to run the recreation room, since prison staff are busy with other responsibilities. Presently, however, Families Free does not have enough volunteers to staff the room full-time. Neal says she hopes to find individuals in the community who "will catch the vision or get a heart for volunteering at the prison . . . so that eventually some volunteer leaders could take up teams on their own," and the activity room could be open every visitation weekend.

However, finding volunteers for Families Free has been tricky for a variety of reasons. First, volunteers pay out of pocket for the commute to rural Mountain City, which is something that Neal hopes to change once she can secure funding.

A second reason involves concerns about safety when volunteering with prisoners. While interacting with convicts outside prison may involve certain risks, Neal assures me that volunteering inside prison is safe. Not only are there guards, but in order to earn visitation rights and participate in the Families Free recreation room, prisoners must have a track record of behaving themselves. Thus, explains Neal, "They are in good standing; so as long as volunteers follow protocol, they will be safe as they serve inside the prison."

A third obstacle to finding volunteers is the fact that many people do not appreciate the nonprofit's mission. "People outside the prison don't really understand what we're doing," Neal observes. "They're like, 'Okay, that's good,' but few understand why helping prisoners is important."

In order to encourage volunteers, Neal has assembled a handbook, and she welcomes anyone curious about the work to join her for a day at the prison.

A fourth problem in recuiting volunteers for Families Free is prejudice against prisoners, passed through a social network of victims and their friends, families, neighbors, and co-workers. Officer Tester, a nineteen-year veteran of the corrections system, has seen this prejudice in action. When people and communities are injured by criminal behavior, Tester notes, "they are not willing to take that second chance" where they might get hurt again.

Neal understands that prisoners are in prison for a reason. While that reason may be an unforgivable crime, the children of prisoners nevertheless remain innocent and in danger of being caught up in the same criminality as their parents. An innocent child, Neal thinks, is cause for anyone to intervene and volunteer inside a prison.

Other organizations, a majority of them prison ministries, provide a variety of interventions targeting prisoners, such as weekend retreats and family reunions. The bottom line, however, is that there are ways to break the cycle of incarceration from within prisons if we choose to access them.

Focus on the Women and Children.

If finding volunteers to work inside prison is too difficult, Kelly Harrell has a solution: Focus on family members outside prison in the community, especially the children left behind when a parent is incarcerated.

As the director of Children of Promise, a mentoring program for children of prisoners, Harrell suggests that mentoring the child of a prisoner is another way to break the cycle of generational incarceration. When asked if mentoring a child once a week could really do all that, Harrell cautioned against underestimating the power of "having someone step into your life and offer a different lifestyle and a different world view. It does huge things for children."

Children of Promise is funded by a federal grant, and the organization has little difficulty

Children playing "Guitar Hero" at the Boys to Men Mentoring Center, Johnson City. Photo courtesy author.

finding volunteers to work with children. But there are obstacles. One is the challenge of providing consistent services to children whose lives are in chaos. "There's a lot of chasing," explains Harrell. "It's not uncommon to lose contact with a kid for a month or two, and then they reappear again. That's just the nature of working with children in this environment."

A second obstacle is gaining the trust of children and their families, says Melissa Neal, who is also a former staff member of Children of Promise. "This is an invisible population. You don't see families saying, 'Hey, I've got somebody in prison or in jail.' You don't see kids saying, 'Yeah, I've got a dad in prison and I want a mentor.' You have to really figure out how to find these families." That often happens at its own pace, through word of mouth.

A third obstacle is shame. "Families are ashamed to admit that they have a family member in prison or jail," explains Neal. "So if they have a hardship come on them due to that person being in prison or jail, they won't go to anyone [in their community] and ask for help." All Children of Promise can do for families hiding their need is to keep an open door and warmly welcome whoever walks through.

Shame is also a significant obstacle for another organization, Kairos Outside, a ministry for women affected by incarceration. In her efforts to reach those women, Donna Crosswait finds that, against the power of shame, not even the church is a sanctuary. Crosswait is a professional Christian counselor and licensed psychological examiner who recently founded a Northeast Tennessee chapter of Kairos Outside. After speaking at many churches, Crosswait has found that women will often conceal the incarceration of a husband or son, fearing rejection from the church community. "So they hold to that and they keep that secret within themselves and try to deal with it, and sometimes they end up just isolating themselves," Crosswait explains. The mission of Kairos Outside is to bring such women together, first through a weekend retreat and later in small support groups.

While helping the women may seem an indirect route to disrupting a cycle of incarceration, if one considers that women traditionally raise the children and run the household, then a transformation among them can blossom radially and change a family from the inside out.

Whether an organization helps prisoners, children of prisoners, or spouses of prisoners, assisting one group may benefit them all, through the sharing of interpersonal connections. Recognizing these connections leads to concern about the extent to which incarceration punishes a family and community through collateral damage. When a parent is incarcerated and a child and spouse are adversely affected, does not the social price of incarceration increase? At what point does incarceration become too expensive a method? There are at least a few ways to fix the solution of incarceration, from inside prisons and outside in communities, at least until something better can be figured. ❖

Matthew Schacht holds a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy from East Tennessee State University.

J. SCOTT GRAHAM: BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY'S PASSIONATE PHOTOGRAPHER

By Stephen Newton

For the last two decades, J. Scott Graham's photographs of the Blue Ridge Parkway have defined America's most visited national park site. His painstaking observation of nature and consummate photographic skill combine to create a passionate artistic vision that has earned him recognition as one of the nation's premier landscape photographers.

Although Graham graduated in January 1988 with a business degree from the University of Tennessee, he believes his real career started on an April afternoon that same year. "I wanted to photograph the Doe River Gorge to help promote a new Christian summer camp I was working with, but I knew nothing about cameras or photography," Graham said. "So my father and I sat on our back-porch while he gave me a quick, ten-minute lesson on the basic functions of his 35 mm camera. Afterwards, I set off to take the photos and never stopped shooting."

Since that April, twenty years ago, Graham has been roaming the North Carolina Mountains and the Blue Ridge Parkway to record the region on film. For artistic authenticity, among other reasons, Graham still prefers to use film in this digital age.

"Digital images are easily manipulated, but film doesn't lie," he said. "I can always authenticate my images by going back to the original transparency. That gives my body of work credibility in a world where seeing is no longer believing. I also prefer editing film on a light table to reviewing images on a computer screen. With film, I can see colors and tones that monitors cannot produce. Perhaps most importantly, though, using film on a shoot forces me to visualize each shot more creatively and more deliberately before releasing the shutter."

Graham's best-selling book, *Blue Ridge Parkway: America's Favorite Journey*, was the first coffee table book ever produced about this country's most popular national park site. It features Graham's iconic images of the region with prose by award-winning author Elizabeth C. Hunter, who also collaborated with Graham to publish a comprehensive guidebook, *Traveling the Blue Ridge Parkway: A Guide to America's Most Scenic Drive*.

Recently, readers of *Blue Ridge Country*, a magazine covering the mountains of nine states from Maryland to Alabama, chose Graham as one of the Best of the Blue Ridge Award winners for 2008. "Every five years, we create a survey to discover

Mabry Mill, Blue Ridge Parkway. Photo courtesy J. Scott Graham.

our readers' favorite towns, festivals, hikes, artists, restaurants, and more," said the magazine's editor, Cara Ellen Modisett. "This year, Graham was selected as Gold Award Mountain Photographer among those favorites. His photographs of the Blue Ridge Mountains made an impression in the region."

Graham's work often appears in the national media. A postcard featuring his photograph of North Carolina's Whitewater Falls has a cameo in Paramount Pictures' *The Soloist*, starring Jamie Foxx. Several of his images will also be used in an upcoming HBO documentary about the University of North Carolina-Duke basketball rivalry.

At the beginning of 2008, Graham introduced his new series of large format giclees. "It's an amazing technique for viewing my images," he said. "The entire process is handcrafted in North Carolina using an extremely fine mist of pigmented inks sprayed onto archival canvas." The results are stunning. "My images have been reproduced on everything from postcards to puzzles, yet the amazing tones and clarity of this process allow each image to look so real. When viewing these giclees, you can almost hear the water falling, feel the warm sun rising, or smell the crisp mountain air."

In addition to his passion for preserving Parkway vistas through coordinated efforts with the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, Graham is also working on similar photographic projects to help promote and fund Caribbean national park sites including Puerto Rico's San Juan National Historic Site (a World Heritage Site) and the U.S. Virgin Islands of St. John, St. Croix, and Buck Island Reef National Monument.

Although he has been asked to photograph a number of other park sites around the country and the globe, Graham's heart belongs to the Blue Ridge Parkway. "From the very first time I traveled this corridor, it felt like home. However, throughout my journeys, I have witnessed a slow evaporation of this linear park due to adjacent development, severe lack of funding, and increasing use," Graham explained. "Since many visitors encounter the Parkway through my images, I feel a tremendous responsibility to create photographs that demonstrate why this national treasure is worth preserving and protecting." ❖

Stephen Newton is a communication professional with extensive experience in marketing, public relations, and corporate communications, as well as new media marketing strategy for higher education, healthcare, non profits, and manufacturing. His freelance writing career has encompassed numerous essays and articles about the Internet, technology, new business trends and culture.

THE TRICKLE IN THE STREAM

By Maurice Manning

O father of the world,
please put your earhorn in

and listen. Why does it
sound so happy? How funny—

it doesn't need a god,
but it has one anyway.

Maurice Manning received the 2000 Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. His most recent book is *Bucolics*. He is a Kentucky native and currently teaches creative writing (poetry) at Indiana University.

APPALACHIA'S RENAISSANCE MAN

By Grace Marshall

Gary Slemp's voice was deep and husky, just ripe for colorful storytelling. Maybe he was born with the gift. His more famous relative, George C. Scott, was well-remembered for his whisky-laced voice. And like his first cousin Scott, Gary was drawn to drama. Born Gary Dale Slemp on January 9, 1947, to Evelyn and William Slemp, he grew up in the heart of coal country, Wise County, Virginia. The child would grow to be an accomplished actor, musician, storyteller, singer, radio announcer, and programmer. He also had a gift for building computers and being a very capable sound technician. He is remembered as a true renaissance man—gifted, complicated, and some would say tragic.

His lifelong friend Jack Wright says he was close to Gary Slemp all his life. Wright is now an assistant professor of film at Ohio University. All those years ago, their mothers were tight friends, and so it was natural that the two bonded. The friendship lasted even though Gary shoved Wright off the roof of a barn when they both were preschoolers. Later, they would act together in a high-school production of *The Robe*. They went their own separate ways for awhile—Gary to college, Jack to the military—but they reunited in the late 1960s to play music—Gary on a twelve-string guitar, Jack on the six-string. Wright says, "For his own delight, Gary wrote and recorded his own songs."

Nancy Salyer, Gary's first wife, recalls, "Although I don't think he was a disciplined songwriter, Gary wrote some very beautiful songs. His happier moments were when he was singing and playing. I told him, 'You hold that guitar more than you hold me.'"

Slemp moved in and out of local bands. One was the Shot the Fox Band and another the Generic No Name Band. Nancy and Gary's daughter, Allison Bartlett, regrets that her father worked all his life

Gary Slemp (center), Frank Taylor, and Don Baker perform in Red Fox / Second Hangin'. *Photograph courtesy Dan Carraco.*

on his music but never produced a CD of his own material. She says he was such a perfectionist that he never thought the music was good enough.

Salyer says Slemp's music never brought money into the house. "We didn't have a lot, but we did have a lot. Our house was always full of music and musicians, actors and actresses." The Slemps lived in a remote home in Scott Robinson Hollow near Pound, Virginia. "Gary was a true bohemian," says Salyer. "He didn't care what anyone thought or said. He did what he wanted. He managed by his wits and his two hands. He was a complicated man and truly brilliant. Just to be around him was a great experience, whether he was singing a song, on the stage acting, or telling a story."

He was a complicated man and truly brilliant.

Tom Countiss is a Wise native who also grew up with Gary, recording and playing music at the studio Slemp built in his home in the hollow. Countiss chuckles, recalling the "Waller in the Holler" parties that Gary Slemp threw. "There was a lot of wine, a lot of beer, a lot of pot, and a whole lot of music. Musicians would gather in small groups and play their own music. You could wander from group to group and hear a variety of talent. We would play until we got so drunk we couldn't play anymore."

In addition to music, Gary Slemp started GDS Productions. He created commercials for area radio stations and laid down tracks for local musicians. Not only was he a recording engineer, he was also a backup vocalist and instrumentalist for a wide variety of artists.

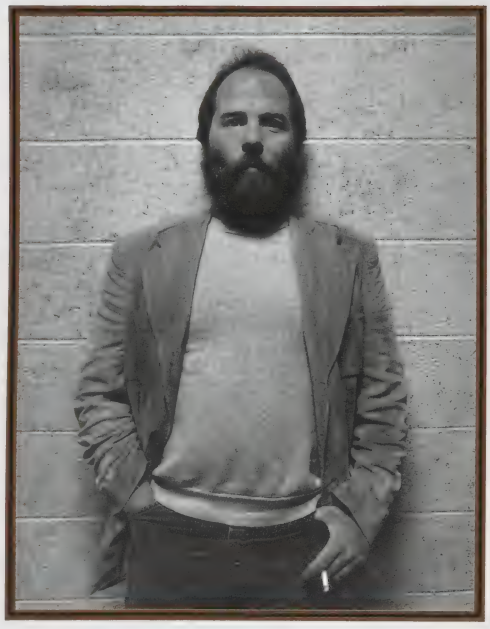
Gary Lawson, in charge of designing and maintaining surveillance systems for the Wise County School District, remembers Slemp as one of the most gifted radio talents he ever heard. At the time, Slemp was working at WFHG radio in Bristol. "I was just a kid, maybe fourteen or so, and I wandered into the House of Blue Lights in Coeburn. Gary was there and told me to pull up a chair and join him. I had said I wanted to do radio and Slemp promised he would help me."

A few short years later, Gary Slemp did just that. Lawson was working as an afternoon announcer at WNVA in Norton, Virginia. Slemp was hired on as program director to whip the station into shape. I was working as a radio announcer at WNVA at the time and can attest to the profound changes Gary introduced to WNVA. Prior to his arrival, we played whatever music moved us at the time. There would be a huge pile of 45s stacked on a cabinet in the back of the room, and we'd pick out our favorites. Slemp brought with him playlists, music rotations, and insistence on a professionalism that hadn't existed before.

Yet Gary's greatest talent was acting. Dudley Cocke, co-author of *Red Fox/Second Hangin'* and director of Roadside Theater, said of Slemp, "He was a smart, independent cuss who spent a lot of time up his holler creating things. On stage, Gary was crafty and subtle, never letting his performance get in the way of the story—he created theater magic much like a magician."

Dr. Charles Lewis worked for Clinch Valley College, now the University of Virginia College at Wise, for over twenty-five years and started the theater department there. Lewis first met Gary when he auditioned for a part at the college in the late 1960s. He praises Gary as "a gifted, beautiful man with enormous talent. He was the best actor we ever had at the college."

Lewis mentored Gary, and their professional relationship lasted until Gary's death. Slemp played major roles in ten productions at the college and did lighting and sound on others. He directed three plays there, including *Scuba Duba, The Odd Couple*, and *Don't Drink the Water*. He acted in several children's shows and wrote one called *When the Angels Learned to Smile.*



Wright asked Wise County native Don Baker to pull together a grant-funded theater project involving students. Baker originally worked with high-school students and then later with students from West Virginia University. "I wanted to do something different and unique, something with our own style, and I had always been interested in the Doc Taylor story," Baker said.

M.B. "Doc" Taylor was a preacher, mystic, and U.S. Marshall who lived in Wise County during the coal boom of the 1890s. His execution was the second hanging in Wise County. The students and Baker were to pen the play, but ultimately Baker decided to do it on his own. He enlisted the help of Dudley Cocke, and the two worked in tandem—one dictating, the other editing.

Red Fox/Second Hangin' had already toured the Alabama state prison system before Gary and fellow actor Frank Taylor joined the cast. Baker, Slemp, and Taylor juggled fifty-five roles in the ninety-minute performance. Taylor remembers the play with fondness. "It was like standup comedy. You're standing in front of and interacting with the audience. But it was really a controlled theatrical piece where every phrase was carefully repeated. The show depended on timing. It was kind of a dance."

The play was a huge success, both locally and in theaters across the country. Before the play's run ended in 1990, the show was performed over 400 times and had two very successful runs off Broadway—in 1977 at the Theater for the New City and in 1978 at the Manhattan Theater Club.

The *Louisville Courier Journal* wrote of those performances, "New York's fashionable East Side might seem the last spot in the country that would prove hospitable to a trio of self-confessed mountain boys from Appalachia telling tales about fightin' and feudin' among their ancestors. Yet such a group held theater audiences in a powerful sway at New York's highly esteemed Manhattan Theater Club."

Smithsonian Magazine did a feature article on the play and had this to say: "In *Red Fox/Second Hangin'*, performers bereft of sets, costumes, and props just talk. They move easily through a multitude of roles—women and children, young men and old—batting lines back and forth, saying some phrases in unison, feeding off each other's rhythms. The result is magic."

There was more praise for the play. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote, *"Red Fox/Second Hangin'* is a brilliant piece of art created out of Appalachian memories of history." The *New York Times* claimed it was "as stirring to the audience for its historical detective work as for the vanishing art of frontier yarnspinning." And the *Louisville Courier Journal* concluded, "*Red Fox/Second Hangin'* recreates, with great charm and visible passion, a part of this country's past the entire nation can treasure. If its inspiration originates in Appalachia, its appeal is universal."

Frank Taylor admits that by 1990 the trio had exhausted their creative energy. Taylor continued to act where he could and currently has over fifty roles to his credit in films and television. Don Baker directed and acted in community theater in Lexington, Virginia, and Wilmington, North Carolina, where he now resides. Gary Slemp kept GDS Productions, his music, and continued in theater in the Wise County area. By this time Gary was divorced, had married Mary Makin, and had two more children.

It just might be that talent is passed down through the helixes of our genetic makeup. All of Gary's children are exceptional in different ways.

Gary Slemp. Photograph courtesy Allison Bartlett.

His eldest, Allison Bartlett, has a degree in interior design from Virginia Tech. Young Will Slemp is a senior at John I. Burton High School in Norton, Virginia, and, like his father, is a whiz at computers. Molly Slemp is only fourteen, but already she has a lengthy list of artistic credits. Jack Wright says, "She is one of the most gifted young people I have ever worked with." Frank Taylor adds, "Molly is an old soul and more talented than all of us put together." Molly's mother said, "I want her to fly with her talent."

Gary's good friends are helping her do just that. Jack Wright included her on the *Music of Coal* CD, a collection of mining songs from the Southern Appalachian coalfields. The CD was submitted for Grammy consideration in 2008. Frank Taylor took Molly to Wilmington to audition for a part in *Hound Dog*, a film starring Dakota Fanning. Frank says she nailed the character and the part perfectly. Molly didn't get the role in *Hound Dog*, but he knows there will be other opportunities for this gifted young woman. An actress since the tender age of three, Molly performs in two theater productions every year with the Appalachian Children's Theater in Wise.

At the age of fifty-eight, Gary was found dead in his bed by his cousin, Johnny Baugh. It is unknown why he died; no autopsy was done. Daughter Allison said it was a "cardiac incident." Jack Wright and Gary's widow Mary said he had suffered seizures prior to his death and had been in and out of the hospital.

Lewis echoed the feelings of most of Gary's friends and family when he said, "We were just stunned." Tom Countiss "felt lost." And, according to Mary Makin, young Molly was "openly stricken." Says Mary, "I will remember Gary as an incredibly talented person. A good father, a good husband. He was gifted, brilliant, a perfectionist, a true renaissance man. He never wanted to be in the spotlight, and he didn't like accolades."

On October 29, 2005, the Wise Baptist Church overflowed with colleagues, friends, and family. Jack Wright orchestrated Gary's memorial, a celebration of his life and many artistic contributions to the Southwest Virginia community where he lived and died. At his service, those who had gathered to say goodbye to Gary Slemp gave him a standing ovation. It was applause long overdue. ❖

Grace Marshall is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Canticle Magazine*. She spent a number of years in southwest Virginia working in radio at WSLC in Roanoke and WNVA in Norton. After thirty years in broadcasting, she retired from radio and now lives in the Pacific Northwest.

MUSIC IN BRIEF

Wayne Winkler

The 2007 release of the two-CD set *Music of Coal* (www.musicofcoal.com) was not widely noticed in the music world. The set, reviewed in this column last year, was produced by the Lonesome Pine Office of Youth in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, and was not widely distributed outside the area. That is a true shame, because the music and the extensive liner notes thoroughly explore the impact of the coal industry on the culture of Southern Appalachia. But even as the number of people involved in mining coal continues to decline, several artists have recognized the cultural impact of the industry. ❖

Jeni and Billy
Jewell Ridge Coal
Jewell Ridge Records
www.jeniandbilly.com

When Billy Kemp of Baltimore met Jeni Hankins of southwest Virginia, he was also introduced to Jewell Ridge, in the coalfields of Tazewell County. Their latest collaboration, *Jewell Ridge Coal*, is steeped in the traditions of the mines and the families whose lives depended on them. From the opening fiddle of "Miner's Reward" to the final chord of "Ain't Got Time for Trouble Blues," *Jewell Ridge Coal* focuses on life in and around the mines. "Tazewell Beauty Queen" ironically frames the pleasures of life as a miner, while "Oxycodone" sounds like the Carter Family singing about one of the contemporary problems of the coalfields. Local 6167 (named after the United Mine Workers local serving the workers at the Jewell Ridge Coal Company) recounts the past glories of the union movement while noting the decline in coal industry employment: "Well, if you go down to the coalfields, there ain't no miners there." The production is simple and uncluttered; the lead instrument is clearly the voice of Jeni, for whom these songs are like members of the family. ❖

Tom Breiding
The Unbroken Circle: Songs of the West Virginia Coalfields
AmeriSon Records
www.tombreiding.com

The songs in this bluegrass-flavored collection concentrate heavily on the disasters that can befall those who work underground. The opening two songs on the CD—an ambient instrumental

entitled "Buffalo Creek Hollow" and "The Longest Darkest Day"—deal with the Buffalo Creek disaster in February 1972, when three slate dams broke on the same day, flooding the eighteen-mile-long hollow and leaving twenty-five people dead and more than 4,000 homeless. "Obituary of Joe Fry" is about a miner who died in the Macbeth Mine explosion of 1937. His wife prays she might see him in Heaven because "he planned to be a Christian someday." "The Singing Coal Miner" opens with a news clip of a miner singing about the 1968 Hominy Falls flood which killed four men but saw the escape of six trapped miners after ten days underground. Mine-related disasters were not always acts of nature. "The Bull Moose Special" recounts the night in 1912 when a Kanawha County sheriff and coal company goons rode through the encampment of striking miners in an armored boxcar, firing their rifles at the strikers, and "The House We Called Home" recalls another anti-union tactic, the removal of union families from company housing. The title cut, which closes the disc, refers to the unbroken circle that is a staple of bluegrass and old-time tunes—the circle of life and family. In this song, the circle is the cycle of poverty, anger, and company negligence and oppression which faced generations of Appalachian miners. ❖

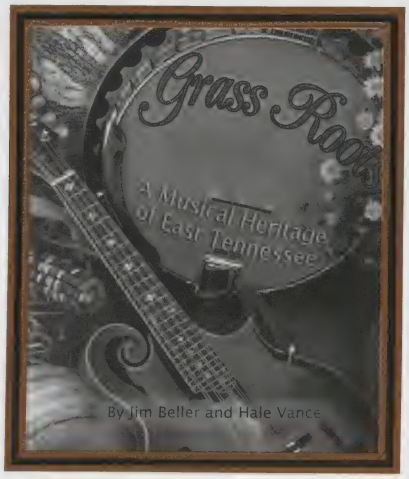
Kathy Mattea
Coal
Captain Potato Records
www.mattea.com

Kathy Mattea grew up in Cross Lanes, West Virginia, deep in the heart of coal country. She wanted to create a tribute to "my place and my people." Coal mining songs were a part of her consciousness ever since she first heard "Dark as a Dungeon" as a child. She began collecting songs for a future coal mining song project. But it was the 2006 Sago Mine disaster that brought the project to fruition. Mattea recalled the 1968 Farmington Mine explosion which killed seventy-eight miners when Mattea was nine years old. "When Sago happened," Mattea recalls, "I got catapulted back to that moment in my life and I thought, 'I need to do something with this emotion, and maybe this album is the place to channel it.'" The songs are mostly familiar coal-country songs, beginning with two Jean Ritchie numbers, "The L&N Don't Stop Here Anymore" and "Blue Diamond Mines." Other well-known songs include "Coal Tattoo," "Dark As a Dungeon," and "You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive." Marty Stuart produced the album and adds mandolin and guitar. Unlike the other two discs reviewed here, *Coal* contains no original material, but any CD with songs by Darrell Scott, Merle Travis, Billy Edd Wheeler, and Hazel Dickens is certain to leave the listener with a sense, even if only fleeting, of the lives of the miners who spent their sometimes foreshortened lives underground. ❖

Wayne Winkler is director of public radio station WETS-FM on the campus of East Tennessee State University and is music editor of *Now & Then*.

"GRASS ROOTS" AND EAST TENNESSEE MUSIC

By Wayne Winkler



The music of Southern Appalachia in general, and east Tennessee in particular, is known throughout the world. Listeners from Stockholm to Singapore are familiar with famous east Tennessee performers such as Chet Atkins (Luttrell), Roy Acuff (Maynardville), Dolly Parton (Sevierville), Doyle Lawson (Kingsport), and Jimmy Martin (Sneedville). east Tennessee has generously shared many of its musical treasures with the rest of the world.

But the portion of the state east of Knoxville, that triangular-shaped wedge between Virginia and North Carolina, has been the home of many equally-talented but lesser-known performers. A new book by Jim Beller and Hale Vance presents biographical sketches of dozens of them. *Grass Roots: A Musical Heritage of East Tennessee* (2008, Hawkins County Publishers) tells the stories of musicians who made the big time, other musicians who weren't well known but still successful in the business, and still others who found no great fame in the music world but who still entertained and inspired with their talents.

Vance is one of those performers who has worked in the region since he and his brother Gene were employed in their father's music store in Rogersville. Working in a music store is a great way to meet musicians, and he met and played with scores of them. He was a part of numerous bands, toured all over the world, and met and encouraged countless younger musicians. Over the years, he wanted to tell their stories. "I was trying to find someone to do it, to find a writer willing to take it on," he says. "I just never was able to find that person." But after retirement, Ellen Myatt, the publisher of the *Rogersville Review* newspaper, contacted Vance with an idea very similar to the one he had nurtured for years—to publish a book on the musicians of east Tennessee.

At about the same time, Jim Beller, who had worked at the *Review* for a time, returned to the newspaper in search of some freelance projects. He happened to arrive on a day when Myatt was discussing the book project with Vance. "She pretty much hired me right then and there to write the book." Beller moved to east Tennessee in 1980 when his father, Dr. Ronald Beller, became president of East Tennessee State University, and though his musical tastes once ran more toward rock and blues, he learned to love the music of the region. "As I've gotten older, I've come to appreciate other genres of music like country and bluegrass, which is the most prevalent music in east Tennessee."

The research was made easier through personal contacts. "Hale does know a lot of people," Beller said.

"I grew up in a family that was very musical," Vance recalls. "I had a lot of exposure to musicians all my life. It was just my passion. It was like people

who follow sports. You just don't forget the stars in baseball or basketball or whatever. You just don't."

When researching performers who had died, Vance and Beller relied on family members and friends. "We got a lot of pictures and stories that way. It was a lot of legwork and some travel."

While many of the performers profiled in *Grass Roots* have been written about extensively in other publications, the book is unique. For one, its focus is on the performers of northeast Tennessee (although a few influential Virginians, Kentuckians, and the like are part of the introductory chapter). Not all the performers were well known outside the region but are recalled fondly by longtime residents. Most importantly, according to Beller, the authors "tried to let as many of the performers as possible tell their own stories without interfering or editing too much—just letting them tell their own stories in their own words. We didn't try to edit their grammar or speech; we let them sound like they sound."

"One of the main goals of this project," Beller continues," is to tell the stories of people whose stories might not be known otherwise. The kind of people who might not have made it all the way as big stars but were just as important in terms of their influence on other musicians in the region."

One such performer cited by Vance is Ralph Mayo. "He was very prominent on the old *Farm and Fun Time* [radio program] in Bristol, and the *Barrel of Fun* from Elizabethton at the Bonnie Kate Theatre."

Grass Roots gives a great deal of credit to radio programs and the early regional country music television programs for promoting the careers of many who might not have been heard otherwise. While Nashville became dominant in country music due to the presence of the powerful clear-channel AM radio station WSM, Vance believes the smaller stations in east Tennessee pioneered such programming and proved its commercial viability, particularly on television. "You didn't see big cities take off with *The Bonnie Lou and Buster Show* or *The Jim Clayton Show* or *The Nick Carter Show*. They did *Lawrence Welk* and things of that nature. [The big-city stations] would have just brushed over this and it would have gotten lost."

One of the pioneers of country music television in east Tennessee was Knoxville grocer Cas Walker, who hosted programs on both radio (WROL) and television (WBIR). Among the future stars who graced Walker's studio was a precociously talented twelve-year-old from Sevier County named Dolly Parton. However, one of Walker's employees had trouble getting his singing sons on Walker's show. Walker would tell the boys' father that their music wasn't popular in the region. But Walker ultimately relented when he felt the boys were ready, and Phil and Don, the Everly Brothers, went on to much greater fame.

Beller and Vance recognize the importance of east Tennessee as a nurturing home for musical talent. "As far back in Tennessee history as you can go," Vance says, "you're gonna find music—guitars, fiddles, banjos."

Both he and Beller recognize that these old instruments laid the foundation for several other types of American music. And though Nashville is recognized as the "capital" of country music, Vance has a somewhat different view. "Nashville is the commercial capital, as far as music is concerned. But when people were playing in this part of the country, the goal wasn't the dollar. Most of the entertainment started at home in the kitchen or the front porch, and then later on to the little schools and theatres and places like that. But those people were not driven by the ever-lovin' dollar. They were driven by their passion for music. I think we [east Tennesseans] concentrate more on relationships, friendships, family, and things of that nature, as opposed to the money and the fame. A lot of the down-to-earth genuine honesty of people like that comes across in their voice, their songs, their thoughts—everything." ❖

Wayne Winkler is director of public radio station WETS-FM on the campus of East Tennessee State University and is music editor of *Now & Then*.

SEARCHING FOR SUT:

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON HARRIS'S GRAVESITE

By M. Thomas Inge

Although the names of George Washington Harris, and his irrepressible creation Sut Lovingood, are not exactly household words, both by now have been accorded a secure place in American and Southern letters. Neither a writer by trade, nor a Southerner by birth, Harris contributed to our literature one of its most distinctively Southern comic figures in Sut and brought the American literary vernacular to its highest level of achievement before Mark Twain.

Born in 1815 in Alleghany City, Pennsylvania, Harris was taken as a child by his half-brother to Knoxville, Tennessee, where he grew up an enthusiastic Southerner in all political and cultural senses of the word. With little formal education, but well-read in English literature, Harris followed a wide cross-section of occupations, including metal working, serving as captain of a steamboat, farming, running a glass works and a sawmill, surveying, running for political office, serving as a postmaster, and working for the railroad—jobs which would provide him with rich life experiences from which to draw when he began to write.

Harris's first publications were political essays and sporting epistles for local newspapers and for the nationally prominent *New York Spirit of the Times*, where he demonstrated a facility for dialect and bringing backwoods scenes and events to life on the printed page. When he contributed his first Sut Lovingood story to the *Spirit of the Times* on November 4, 1854, he outdistanced all the other humorists of the Old South by allowing one central character to tell his own stories in his own crude language and by granting that character full independence in thought and action.

What makes Sut distinctive, among other things, is the consistent combination in his character of such human failings as bigotry, vulgarity, cowardice, and brutality, alongside a steadfast opposition to hypocrisy, dishonesty, taking advantage of the innocent, and limits on personal freedom. Sut's wildly funny pranks and incorrigible nature lead to a rough justice of sorts, with hypocrites exposed and dishonesty punished. Mark Twain, who reviewed Harris's one book in 1867, *Sut Lovingood: Yarns*, would learn his lessons well from Sut and put them to effective use later in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Whether or not Huck would have existed at all without the literary example of Sut is an interesting question.

Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun by a Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool proved to be very popular in its own time and would remain in print, from the same plates as the first edition, into the early decades of the twentieth century. Its longevity was partly sustained by its shady reputation as a bawdy book not for the timid or weak-hearted. Booksellers sold it surreptitiously and in a plain brown wrapper.

Illustration by Justin Howard.

Two mysteries about Harris have been longstanding and seemingly irresolvable. He had collected a second set of his stories in a manuscript to be called *High Times and Hard Times* and traveled in December of 1869 from Decatur, Alabama, to Richmond and Lynchburg, Virginia, to arrange for its publication. Afterward, on a train bound for Knoxville, Harris fell ill and, when he arrived in an unconscious state, was carried to the Atkins House in that city. Just before he died, he whispered the word "poisoned."

As the obituary in the *Knoxville Daily Press and Herald* put it on December 14, 1869, did Harris die "by the stroke of God, or the poisoned chalice of a wicked man"? That mystery may be beyond solving, but not so the second—that is the location of his gravesite. According to the same obituary, Harris's second wife of less than two months, and now sudden widow, traveled to Knoxville and accompanied the body to Chattanooga. There the trail ends, since Harris's body can be found in no cemetery in Chattanooga. Scholars have sought to find the gravesite elsewhere to no avail. Once a George Washington Harris was found to be buried in City Cemetery in Nashville, but he turned out to be the wrong one.

An independent scholar from Atlanta, John S. Bayne, has for years been tracking down the graves of prominent people, photographing the sites, and reporting the results of his research at annual meetings of the Popular Culture and American Culture associations. In 2006 Bayne decided to focus on Southern writers with the aim of producing a book on the subject. The photographs he has collected have been very revealing for what they tell us about our attitudes toward our writers and the extent to which we choose to remember, or forget, them.

In seeking Harris's grave, Bayne came up against the usual dead ends but chose to persist by contacting all the history centers, state and local archives, and public libraries in Nashville, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Since Harris was residing in Decatur, Alabama, at the time of his death, Bayne wrote to the curator of the Morgan County Alabama Archives, who in turn put him in contact with Decatur historian and genealogist Phil Wirey and Randy Cross, a professor of English at Calhoun Community College in Decatur, specialist in Southern literature, and editor of several books by Tennessee novelist T. S. Stribling. When other colleagues learned of the search for Harris, Bayne, Wirey, and Cross were soon joined by Sheila Byrd and Jill Chadwick of Calhoun Community College to form an unofficial search committee to find the lost writer. In addition, as officers of Sigma Kappa Delta, the national English honor society, Byrd and Chadwick persuaded the organization's board to underwrite the construction of a proper monument, should Harris be found.

It was genealogist Wirey who eventually discovered the key. Knowing that it was not an uncommon practice in the nineteenth century for remarried husbands to be buried with their first wives, he sought out the grave of Mary Emiline Nance Harris, who died in 1867 in Trenton, Georgia, and left behind five children. Wirey theorized that the second very recent wife brought the body to Trenton for burial at the request of the children who lived there. Probably the family could not afford a headstone during difficult Reconstruction times, so the practice in such cases was to substitute a small triangular fieldstone marker against something better in the future. When a delegation visited Mary's gravesite in the Brock Cemetery, all of this proved to be accurate and true. Next to her grave was a burial depression and a marker exactly of the kind described. Sut had been found—or at least they are ninety percent sure that Harris is the person resting there.

Such is the conclusion of the search committee and the Trenton community, who gathered at the site on the sunny Sunday afternoon of April 20, 2008, to unveil the five-foot obelisk erected by Sigma Kappa Delta just in front of the unmarked fieldstone. About 150 people attended the ceremony and were welcomed by Trenton Mayor Anthony Emanuel. Speakers included all the members of the search committee, as well as the present writer, who was asked to make some comments

on behalf of Harris's contributions to American literature. A dedication prayer and a scripture from the Bible about the importance of laughter were read by Kevin Fowler, a great, great-grandson of George Washington Harris. He had come from New Mexico with his father, Bill Fowler, a great-grandson, and his son Will Fowler, a great, great, great-grandson, to participate in the ceremony—three generations of Harris descendants.

When I was asked to suggest an appropriate epitaph for the monument, someone had already suggested a line from "Amazing Grace," "I once was lost but now am found," which would have suited Harris's sense of humor. Then I remembered a line from a story about the death of Sut Lovingood which has survived only in a fragment. Parson Bullen pronounces the brief funeral oration over Sut's body: "We air met, my brethering, to bury this ornery cuss. He had hosses, an' he run 'em; he had chickens, an' he fit 'em; he had kiards, an' he played 'em. Let us try an' recollect his virtues—ef he had any—an' forgit his vices—ef we can. For of sich air the kingdom of heaven!" The obelisk bears on one side those last two sentences in full dialect.

What would Harris or Sut have to say about all this? Sut might repeat a line from "Parson John Bullen's Lizards," one of his best known yarns: "Some durn'd fool professor dun this, who hed more zeal than sence." It is to be hoped, however, that the redoubtable search committee, flushed with its success, will now turn to the third and final mystery about George Washington Harris. Whatever happened to that manuscript of *High Times and Hard Times* that Harris had with him on that fateful trip? It has never been found. ❖

Further Reading

The works of George Washington Harris can be found in three volumes, if not available in new copies then in used ones from various Internet booksellers. All are edited by M. Thomas Inge: *Sut Lovingood's Yarns* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1966); *High Times and Hard Times: Sketches and Tales* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967); and *Sut Lovingood Yarns: A Facsimile of the 1867 Dick and Fitzgerald Edition* (Memphis: St, Luke's Press, 1987).

M. Thomas Inge is the Robert Emory Blackwell Professor of Humanities at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. The Society for the Study of Southern Literature gave him the Richard Beale Davis Award in 2008 for lifetime contributions to Southern letters.

The Blue Star: A Novel
By Tony Earley
Little, Brown and Company
New York, 2008
$23.99 (hardcover), 286 pages

Tony Earley's Jim Glass, adolescent hero of the novel *The Blue Star*, gives me hope that American boys can become men. Granted, this earnest and thoughtful young man, whose context is 1940s America on the brink of WWII, is nurtured and loved by his family and community, neither of which is dysfunctional or damaged. But Jim faces real choices with real consequences in a real community. Jim will make his journey out from the North Carolina mountains to the larger world. But his journey is no American idyll on the open road or frantic flight from oppressive forces. Jim lives in "a moral universe," says Earley, where he may not have all the answers but is required to grapple with the questions. "You have to choose to be a good man," his Uncle Zeno tells him. "You have to choose every minute of every day. As soon as you don't you're lost."

Don't let this decisive, old-fashioned admonition fool you. This is not a sentimental story of simpler times, clear-cut values, and moral messages. It is the story of how complex and difficult active and ongoing choice is for a boy who wants to be and will be a "good man."

Reviewers of Tony Earley's first novel, *Jim the Boy*, featuring a younger Jim Glass, noted Earley's deliberate rejection of narrative pyrotechnics in favor of linear plot, meaningful story, and human characters. By employing a time-honored storytelling method, Earley hoped to reclaim a literary and cultural perspective free of the smug irony that characterizes much of contemporary life and fiction. That he has done so without sacrificing complexity of character or situation, without evoking an idealized rural paradise, without mourning lost American innocence confirms Earley's gifts as a storyteller.

With the second installment of the Jim Glass saga, Earley continues his challenge to postmodernist sensibility by making Jim not only a vital part of family and community but also a knowing participant in history. It is this sense, perhaps more than anything else, that informs Jim's character and choices, his understanding that he is implicated in forces larger than his insulated world would suggest, that he has moral responsibilities that matter as he steps onto a moving train which will take him to war and to citizenship in the larger world. Such sentiments were once commonplace in American coming of age stories. But now that we're all lost in an eternal and ephemeral present, our history recycled as parody or pastiches, our historically bereft young people adrift in cyberspace, Earley's vision is indeed startling.

Jim's history emerges from stories, even in his high school history class where his teacher abandons the text to make history live through story: "'To think,' she said, 'that I knew someone who knew someone who once held in his very hands a sword and helmet worn by a member of de Soto's army.'" According to Miss Brown, the great Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto is not even found in North Carolina history textbooks, since official history discounts oral tradition and privileges English heritage: "But had history played out in

a slightly different manner," she says, "this class today would be conducted entirely in Spanish."

The way history "plays out" is the point, especially as the signs of imminent war begin to disrupt the familiar fabric of life in Jim's Appalachian hometown of Aliceville, signaled most notably by the whistles of unscheduled troop trains. Jim's attempts to take clear, logical notes in history class are futile since the test he expects is not to be in the schoolroom but in "the beauty and sadness of the world. . . . He felt as though he had spent his life. . . poised over an exam, waiting for the teacher to say, 'Begin.'" Even Jim's love for a half-Cherokee mountain girl is affected by historical events since her boyfriend Bucky Bucklaw is stationed at Pearl Harbor and since her mother, once engaged to Jim's Uncle Zeno, rejected him when he refused to fight in WWI.

Chrissie Steppe's beautiful long black hair spilling over the back of her desk onto Jim's history book and transporting Jim into "a magical place" is a vivid image of sensuous immediacy displacing history and politics. But Jim's carefree friend Dennis Deane soon finds himself an expectant father married to a young girl he barely knows, working in the local mill which produces "miles and miles" of khaki twill for Army uniforms. A quilt originally intended for Jim's future marriage to "the girl next door" becomes a gift for the struggling newlyweds, the traditional handsewn pattern of female domestic art and comfort transferred to a factory town where women work the assembly line. Local schoolboys go off to war and the blue star, the service banner displayed in the homes of soldiers, replaces the schoolhouse quilt.

By the time Jim's class graduates, all their lives have changed radically, as the valedictorian proclaims: "Though we did not ask for the responsibility, we, the class of 1942, have by circumstance and necessity been asked to take up the lever before us and move the world." Dennis Deane says to Jim, "I knew that one day I'd have to stop acting stupid and go to work and get married and all that stuff, but damn, Jim, I didn't figure it would happen so soon." Senior year becomes an adult rite of passage for these youngsters leading, inexorably, to the last scene in which Jim "let go and turned away and stepped off the platform onto the moving train." Aliceville, Jim realizes, "wasn't. . . . much of a place to leave from or, for that matter, come back to," but it's his place. And his people turn out to see him off, the uncles kissing him "unashamedly," "the girl" promising to wait for him, Jim's history teacher exhorting him to "[r]emember the lessons of the conquistadors": "Do not let go of your helmet and sword, not even for a moment!" Jim Glass, shaped by local history, begins his journey into world history, an explorer grounded in the traditions of home, carrying schoolhouse lessons onto the battlefield.

Chrissie had once playfully called Jim "Hernando" in a made-up game of old married folks when they stop for shelter in an abandoned house on their way up a mountain road, and the tension between home and road, a constant in American life and literature, resides in that image. "I think we need to get on up the road," says Chrissie, and "together they stared into the fog and imagined the world that lay beyond it." Ponce de Leon imagined a fountain of youth, de Soto cities of gold, Jim "the hopeful radiance of undiscovered stars." To this young man, "the great mechanisms" of the universe seem "almost understandable while remaining incomprehensible," but "the secret to everything" is in Chrissie's farewell kiss. Jim's vision is infinite but anchored to the people he loves, to the place he knows. To Jim's prayer "[p]rotect us all from the spirits of despair" I say amen–and offer up my own prayer for Tony Earley, whose stories protect me. ❖

Gina Herring is a past contributor to the book pages of *Now & Then* and professor of English at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky.

Notions: A Jim Clark Miscellany: Prose and Poems 1983-2006
By Jim Clark
Rank Stranger Press
Mount Olive, NC, 2007
$15 (paperback), 282 pages; includes CD single, "One Night Late"

From its self-deprecating title throughout, *Notions: A Jim Clark Miscellany* offers a familiar, warm voice, well-considered opinions, and admirable creativity. It sounds just like him.

That consistency of voice makes this collection a worthwhile read, with its content ranging from incidental topical poems to philosophy-based literary analysis. Aside from the preface, in which Clark refers to himself as an "Amateur Dilettante," the collection contains five short stories, eleven pieces of nonfiction prose (discussions of Crèvecoeur, Davidson, Reece, and Stevens, book reviews, and anecdotes), his play *The Girl with the Faraway Eye*, and nine poems.

The thematic links between the stories and the play will become immediately apparent, as Clark's pursuit of what it means to be a Southern writer will invite clear comparisons between his textual studies and his more deliberately creative work. I confess that I find it a bit problematic that some hold the misconception that literary study does not qualify as artistic creativity; pedantic analysis deserves the same disdain as poor imaginative attempts. Clark resolves this dilemma by blurring the distinctions, adding a Wallace Stevens parody to the end of a book review, hooting an expostulation of joy in another (he does not literally write "Amen!" when discussing Eudora Welty's defense of Southern writers, but he means it), and including personal anecdotes about the subjects of other essays. Clark's pursuit of what it means to be a Southern writer is not so much definition as exploration, and when these same literary figures appear in his poems or their influence shade the stories and play, we find common threads from Clark's endeavor to define "Southern writer" by being a Southern writer. I do not intend to suggest that this volume seems didactic, but I have read *Notions* with the awareness that Clark's work reflects an Appalachian life when better roads and intrusive national media threaten to make cherished tradition look like ignorant or "precious" provincialism; he has survived this assault, if only "just a little worse for wear and tear."

For people who find themselves so wrapped up in the contemporary world with inescapable pop culture, there's comfort in his achievement, sure enough. As the adult Beth, the title character of The *Girl with the Faraway Eye*, comes to understand, "Being of a different generation, and having been formed by different experiences, I guess it's not surprising that I see things differently." So I am not surprised to see the allusions to Steppenwolf (the "*Born to Be Wild*" one), a tribute to Warren Zevon, and comparisons to Mick Jagger in these pieces just as the central figures and Clark himself weigh the strength of tradition against the pull

of the modern. But at the same time, I am not surprised to find Clark and his characters, as they define themselves, fiercely loyal to the people and the region—they rebel against the presumption of how they should live, and they later grow to love Appalachia on their own terms as their experiences give them a broader capacity to appreciate it.

I do wish, however, that the book had included the specific composition and publication dates of the pieces, because it would have been worthwhile to see the development process of ideas and themes, particularly because related events show up in different works. It would be nice to know who the photographed girl on the back cover is, since the picture suggests she has been the inspiration behind Beth, the character from the play. I confess that I am still distracted by wondering how many editors permitted the error about Genesis in the Crèvecoeur essay to pass without correction. Nevertheless, I take my curiosity as yet another confirmation that *Notions* has engaged me. I have learned things, I have been entertained, I have been prompted to consider Southern writing in new ways, and I have been itching to get some more writing of my own done.

Reading *Notions* has been like listening to Jim Clark. ❖

Thomas Alan Holmes teaches, writes, and lives in Johnson City, Tennessee, where he joined the East Tennessee State University English Department in 1996. His work has appeared in *The Black Warrior Review*, *The Florida Review*, *The South Atlantic Review*, and *The Appalachian Journal*.

Mother Land: Poems
By Linda Parsons Marion
Iris Press
Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 2008
$14.00 (paperback), 73 pages

Linda Parsons Marion's second collection of poems, *Mother Land*, focuses on her long, troubled relationship with her mother, particularly during the poet's pre-teen and teen years in the '60s. One of the book's most impressive aspects is the way the autobiographical details accumulate—tantalizingly but steadily—to present a coherent family portrait. Reading it is like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, and brings the same kinds of satisfactions and surprises. Anyone interested in having that experience may want to stop reading after this paragraph and just go buy the book.

A rough sketch of *Mother Land's* portrait would look something like this. At age eleven, Marion left her emotionally unstable mother in Nashville to live in Knoxville with her father, whom her mother had divorced for his infidelity; by this point he had remarried, and the poet found her stepmother to be as kind and supportive as her mother was irascible and hurtful. Escaping her mother meant also escaping her stepfather, who presented a sexual threat: Addressing her mother in "Running from Blood," she calls him "your man / knowing my season of ripeness." Yet the escape required her to leave behind her siblings and her beloved grandmother as well, and the father she runs to remains an enigma to her. Furthermore, the poet is left with a lifetime of ambivalence toward her mother: Although her mother wounded her badly, Marion cannot forsake a sense of duty to her, and several poems detail their relationship over the ensuing decades. As recounted in "Diagnosis," at seventy-three her mother is formally diagnosed with manic depression, a condition Marion had long suspected. At last there is what the poet calls "an answer to our lifelong argument," but having that answer hardly erases the battle scars.

The book is aptly named. The title reinforces the impression that Marion ponders her relationship with her mother so much that—the eleven-year-old's physical flight notwithstanding—she can never really leave her behind. Yet it also alludes to Marion's therapeutic gardening: That is, her "mother land" is her sustaining mother earth. Indeed, the poet combines the two perspectives by describing her self-analysis as a kind of necessary earth-working. For example, in the second poem, "Unearthed," referring transparently to the painful autobiographical details soon to emerge, she writes, "This refuse I unearth / to shards of day, ease back in its burying place. / Topsoil I peel open for flecks of mica deep down." Yet, despite the numerous "flecks of mica" that turn up throughout the book—she records family love as well as family pain—the process doesn't wholly satisfy, as she reports in "This Digging": "This digging takes me nearly to the locus, but there's never / enough lamplight to the fertile throat, the anthracite marrow. / Should I hammer old sorrows, strata by strata, until brittle as birchbark?" She admits she can only get "[n]early down to grace."

As a book offering an insider's uncomfortable perspective on a particular family, *Mother Land* recalls work by such long-celebrated poets as

Robert Lowell, Allen Ginsberg, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath; it also brings to mind books by more recent figures, including Sharon Olds, Cathy Smith Bowers, Michael McFee, and Claudia Emerson. Such poetry runs a risk: What if the poet comes off as an unsympathetic revenger, or as someone too prepared to treat human suffering as "material"? In the former case, we end up feeling the poet has abused his or her gift by publicly training it against someone who cannot respond; in the latter, we feel the poet has become an indecent opportunist, a desecrator. The poets mentioned above vary in their ability to write both memorably and humanely about their families; Marion should be counted among those who succeed in that balancing act. Her prefatory poem, "Credo," opens with a winning metaphor that announces the book's spirit overall: She writes, "I believe in the bicycle of forgiveness." Twenty-five lines later, anticipating her mother's death, she concludes,

I believe I will stand at the opened earth
and grieve for the wasteland we've ridden far and wide,
light slanting on hills we never stopped to admire. I believe
grace will carry us there if we lean into the hairpin curves,
pedal hard, in life or after, beyond the blue rise.

Mother Land is a remarkable milestone far along that journey. ❖

Robert West's poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Iron Mountain Review*, *Poetry*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*. He is the author of two poetry chapbooks: *Best Company* (2005) and *Out of Hand* (2007).

BOOKS IN BRIEF

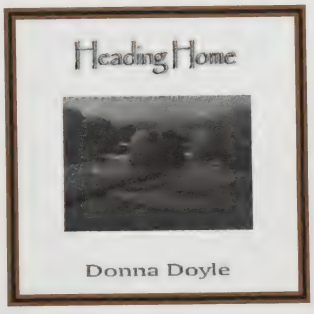
MARIANNE WORTHINGTON

All There Is to Keep, poems by Rita Sizemore Riddle (Iris Press, 2008)

Virginia poet and Radford University English professor Rita Sizemore Riddle's posthumous collection was lovingly edited by Jim Minick and other members of the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative, a long-standing group of writers, of which Riddle was an active member. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to a scholarship honoring her.

My Appalachia: A Memoir, by Sidney Saylor Farr (University Press of Kentucky, 2007)

The former editor of *Appalachian Heritage* and author of several nonfiction books, Sidney Farr recounts her life's journey and Appalachian upbringing in this straight-forward and inspirational memoir.

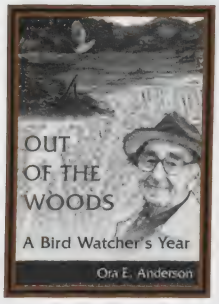


Heading Home, poems by Donna Doyle (Finishing Line Press, 2008)

Knoxville, Tennessee, resident Donna Doyle's first collection of poems comes recommended by poet Bill Brown who writes, "Poignant with epiphany and surprising language, Doyle's poems head home to a place that might not be your home, but it will be when you read her book."

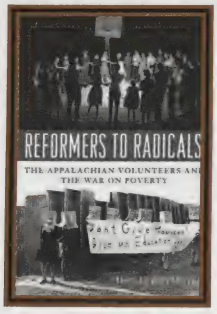
New Growth: Recent Kentucky Writings, edited by Charlie Sweet and Hal Blythe (Jesse Stuart Foundation, 2007)

This interesting and underrated anthology contains some of the best of Kentucky's emerging literary voices, handpicked by Silas House (fiction), George Brosi (nonfiction), and Frank X. Walker (poetry).



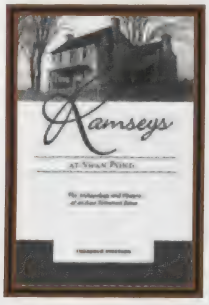
Out of the Woods: A Bird Watcher's Year, by Ora E. Anderson, edited by Deborah Griffith, illustrated by Julie Zickefoose
(Ohio University Press, 2007)

Ora E. Anderson was a journalist, conservationist, naturalist, and artist born in 1911 in Hendricks, Kentucky. This posthumous collection (he died in 2006 at age 94) features his poems and essays on birds and bird watching in southeastern Ohio.



Reformers to Radicals: The Appalachian Volunteers and the War on Poverty, by Thomas Kiffmeyer (University Press of Kentucky, 2008)

Kiffmeyer is a Morehead State University history professor who chronicles the rise and fall of the Appalachian Volunteers, an activist organization that worked from 1964-1970 to improve the lives of the Appalachian poor.



The Ramseys at Swan Pond: The Archaeology and History of an East Tennessee Farm, by Charles H. Faulkner (University of Tennessee Press, 2008)

This University of Tennessee professor of anthropology spent twenty-two years investigating the archaeology of the historic Ramsey house of Knox County, Tennessee, built in 1797. His book offers an overview of the Ramsey house excavations, including maps, photographs, and references.

Southern Appalachian Poetry: An Anthology of Works by 37 Poets, edited by Marita Garin
(McFarland & Company, 2008)

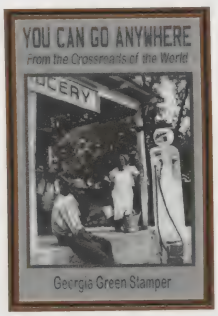
Although the editor began work on this project in 1989 and had it ready for publication by 1993, only now has it been offered to readers. The work of thirty-seven Appalachian poets is featured, along with their autobiographical essays, notes on the poets, and the editor's important introduction to the collection.

The Well String, by Noel Smith
(MotesBooks, 2007)

Raised in New York City, poet Noel Smith was a social worker with Mary Breckinridge and the Frontier Nursing Service in Leslie County, Kentucky. Many of her poems in this first collection are inspired by her service in the mountains. Silas House calls *The Well String* a "novel in poems" which records the lives of the fictional Caton family and their neighbors over several generations.

Working Girl Blues: The Life & Music of Hazel Dickens, by Hazel Dickens and Bill C. Malone
(University of Illinois Press, 2008)

In addition to country music scholar Bill Malone's essential introduction of Hazel Dickens (perhaps itself worth the cost of the book), this slim volume includes the lyrics to forty of Dickens' songs along with her comments on the songs' origins. What a valuable little handbook on this inspiring West Virginia singer of labor, union, folk, and traditional songs.



You Can Go Anywhere from the Crossroads of the World, by Georgia Green Stamper
(Wind Publications, 2008)

Georgia Green Stamper's first nonfiction collection includes essays, newspaper columns, and radio commentary delivered with sharp wit and intelligence. She writes a bi-weekly column for the *Owenton* (Kentucky) *News-Herald* and regularly delivers commentary on a National Public Radio-affiliated station. ❖

Marianne Worthington is the book review editor of *Now and Then.*

THE FABRIC OF WAR

By Fred Sauceman

I didn't find the letter until twenty-five years after my father's death. We knew about the French postcards, the German camera, the Bronze Star. But somehow the letter had gotten buried beneath all the souvenirs of war. It's yellowed and creased, but every typewritten letter is still legible. The grammar is mathematically precise. The masthead is a hand-drawn screaming eagle, emblem of the United States Army's 101st Airborne Division. The date is Christmas Eve, 1944.

What I had found was General Anthony C. McAuliffe's newsletter to the troops engaged in the Battle of the Bulge at Bastogne, Belgium. "Merry Christmas" is emblazoned across the top.

"What's Merry about all this, you ask?," McAuliffe wrote that December 24.

> "We're fighting -- it's cold, we aren't home. All true but what has the proud Eagle Division accomplished with its worthy comrades the 10th Armored Division, the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion and all the rest? Just this: We have stopped cold everything that has been thrown at us from the North, East, South and West. We have identifications from four German Panzer Divisions, two German Infantry Divisions and one German Parachute Division. These units, spearheading the last desperate German lunge, were headed straight west for key points when the Eagle Division was hurriedly ordered to stem the advance. How effectively this was done will be written in history, not alone in our Division's glorious history but in World history. The Germans actually did surround us; their radios blared our doom."

The General goes on to quote the German Commander's demand for surrender. About four-fifths of the way down the page, centered, each letter underlined, spaced, capitalized, and followed by an exclamation point, is General McAuliffe's rejoinder, probably the most famous one-word quotation in history: "N U T S!"

"Allied Troops are counterattacking in force," General McAuliffe reported to his men. "We continue to hold Bastogne. By holding Bastogne we assure the success of the Allied Armies. We know that our Division Commander, General Taylor,

With World War II behind them, the employees of Southern Garment celebrate Christmas 1945 and turn their attention from armored flyers' vests to ladies' dresses. Ernest Gualano is in the light-colored suit, facing the camera, with his son Petey to his right. Photo courtesy Wanda Sauceman.

will say: 'Well Done!' We are giving our country and our loved ones at home a worthy Christmas present and being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms are truly making for ourselves a Merry Christmas."

My father, a glider pilot, had survived the Normandy Invasion on June 6, 1944, only to find himself hiding in Belgian basements during the Germans' last gasp push west. The weather that winter was almost as nasty as the Nazis. It was the coldest in decades.

My father and mother were not yet married. Their wedding was nearly three years away. My father, in harm's way as he had been during most of the war, naturally wondered if that day would ever come. As a reminder of home, he had named a truck for his fiancée. He and his buddies drove it through the snow at night with the lights off to prevent detection in the forest. Seconds after they left the vehicle for a stretch break, it was shelled by the Germans.

Like so many other fiancées, wives, mothers, grandmothers, and sisters, my mother felt a paralyzing helplessness as news reports told of the entrapment of the 101st. She didn't drive rivets or wrap bandages to advance the war effort. Instead, she found fabric.

While the troops of the 101st Airborne were fighting for their lives and for the preservation of Western civilization in the woodlands of Belgium, Ernest Gualano was moving his family from Chicago to Greeneville, Tennessee, to open a factory. It was called Southern Garment Corporation, and my mother took an office job there. In the beginning, the garments sewed and stitched weren't skirts and blouses. Ernest and his employees devised their own gift for the Allied armies. They began making armored flyers' vests.

The Gualanos were one of the few Italian families in town back then. Greeneville had no Catholic church when they arrived. Services were held inside the Capitol Theatre on Main Street.

With so many Greenevillians far from home battling the Axis Powers, the employees of Southern Garment embraced the chance to support the war effort by literally creating an extra layer of protection for the American soldiers.

"You all may be very proud of the work you are doing, as you are instrumental in getting our boys a life saving garment," read a sign on the company's bulletin board. "These garments are billed direct by Southern Garment Corporation to the Ordnance Department. The demand for these garments is critical, and YOU are surely doing your share to help in the war."

In its early 1945 announcement of the plant's opening, the *Greeneville Sun* newspaper reported, "All work is done by machinery from the cutting in which seventy-five layers of cloth are cut to the last touch. Each machine has its own motor and every labor saving device which can speed production and make the work easier is employed. At noon the employees assemble in the large well lighted front room where long tables and benches are arranged for their use. At the present time employees are bringing their lunch, but later food will be served."

My mother remembers Mrs. Leona Gualano brightening those war era meals by taking an angel food cake, slicing it in half, scattering strawberries in the middle, reassembling the cake, and icing it with whipped cream.

After the war, Southern Garment was retooled and converted to the production of stylish dresses for women. Ernest Gualano kept active in retirement, playing checkers at the barber shop, collecting coins, working crossword puzzles, playing cards, going to the library, shopping for groceries, and cooking. The Gualanos cherished their time in Greene County, and even though they had moved away, they chose to return, eventually to be buried on the grounds of the Chuckey United Methodist Church, since Notre Dame had no graveyard.

Gifts come in many forms. My father's gifts were bravery and sacrifice; my mother's the ingenuity involved in making a new industry succeed. What Mr. Gualano gave Greenevillians was not only employment but, more importantly,

a purpose, a means to overcome that helplessness, a hands-on way to help win the war.

Shortly before his death, when he was ninety-five years old, he created another gift—one his family will treasure forever. He assembled a recipe booklet. Most of the twenty-one recipes, written in his own hand, are classic Italian-American fare, and each is signed, "Love, Grandpa." In recipes that called for sausage, he always specified "Tennessee Pride," paying allegiance to his adopted Southern homeland. Ernest's son presented the booklet to my mother upon the death of his father, less than a month before the elder Gualano would have turned ninety-six. This recipe for spaghetti sauce included in that booklet is an edible remembrance of the hope and purpose this Italian immigrant family brought to a small East Tennessee town in the time of war. ❖

ERNEST GUALANO'S SPAGHETTI SAUCE WITH MEAT

1 6-ounce can tomato paste
2 ½ cups crushed tomatoes
2 ½ cups tomato sauce
1 cup water
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
2 ribs celery, chopped
1 tablespoon oregano
¼ teaspoon parsley (more if using fresh)
2 tablespoons picante sauce
¾ pound ground sirloin
½ cup red wine
4 ounces canned mushrooms*

*Fresh mushrooms, sliced and sautéed in butter, can be used in this sauce, but in the 1940s, they were a rarity in East Tennessee groceries.

Add all tomatoes and water into a 5-quart pot. Bring to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes. In a fry pan, heat olive oil and sauté garlic, onions, and celery until slightly brown, stirring constantly. Add to tomato mixture. Stir in oregano, parsley, and picante sauce and simmer for one hour. Meanwhile, in a fry pan, brown ground sirloin, drain off any grease, and add to the pot. Stir in mushrooms and wine and simmer for 30 minutes. This makes enough sauce for one pound of pasta.

Love,
Grandpa

Fred Sauceman is editor of *Now & Then* and the author of the three-volume series *The Place Setting: Timeless Tastes of the Mountain South—from Bright Hope to Frog Level* (Mercer University Press).

TABLECLOTH

"This will become
a cloth to be passed through
generations, needle of the mother, needle of the daughter crossing
the cloth over and over. "
Rita Maria Magdaleno, *Embroidering*

She steps into the kitchen, checkbook in hand,
flannel sleeves over T-shirt over jeans,
her five children swallowed by the yellow bus.
Every morning she becomes the sandwich,
the knife, the plastic bag being sealed,
being opened to feed them. What's to be paid?
Utilities or rent? Her cigarette's lit, she twists
her hair. Using the Cheerios box, she cuts a sign:

PIES, CAKES, COOKIES
FRIDAY—SATURDAY

Something to do when nothing can be done.

Legs crossed, her foot kicks my body.
I am the pale one, the quiet one who hears
all, first at her table accepting butter's
awkward kiss, catching crumbs, studying
so many feet, years of company shoes
scarring the garage-sale pedestal.

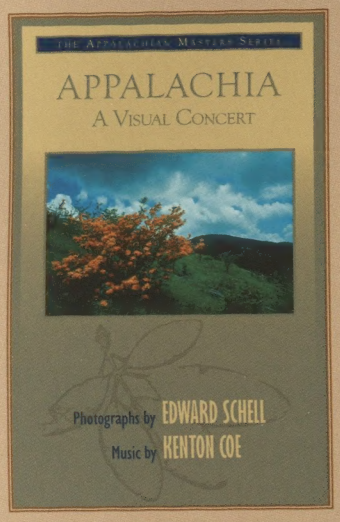
Still, she paints with embroidery needles.
Once she held me in her lap—her voice
was my breath, her thread, my eyes—
wooden hoops the size of dinner plates
stretched, pulled white cotton fields till
a hundred bluebirds landed in my hem.

In this house trailer, we wrinkle, hang tough,
hang together, slightly over the edge.
We accept the years' coffee stains,
small burn holes, freckled spots
where stuff dries like blood.
Both of us know we arrived too late
for parasols and gentlemen.

Jeanne Bryner was born in Appalachia and works as a nurse and writer. She received a 2007 Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council.

SIGNING OFF

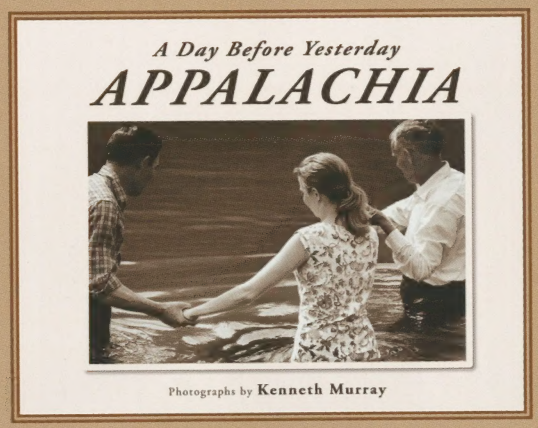
In addition to *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine,* the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University released these products in 2008.



APPALACHIA: A VISUAL CONCERT

This DVD combines the artistry of photographer Edward Schell with the music of composer Kenton Coe. Schell is the recipient of the national Sierra Club's Ansel Adams Award for outstanding conservation photography. Coe is an internationally known composer who holds distinction as the first American composer to have an opera performed at the Paris Opera House.

Bonus features include interviews with each artist, a selected slide identification show, and a continuous loop option. Running time: approximately 46 minutes.



APPALACHIA: A DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

Photographs by Kenneth Murray

George Vecsey, *New York Times* sports columnist and colleague of Ken Murray said it best: "He [Murray] would become one of the great photographers of Appalachia who could capture the devastation from strip mining or the beauty of a pony on a snowy hillside with equal perfection. Because he is from the region, he is not obtrusive, he is not looking to shock or transform. He shows up, he sounds like them, he takes out his camera and comes up with a photo of a miner fiercely proud of his dangerous work, or from children, smiling innocently. He is an artist. He sees how things look, better than the rest of us."

Forward by George Vecsey; Introduction by Roberta Herrin, Ph.D., 152 pages, 240+ black-and-white photographs, softbound.

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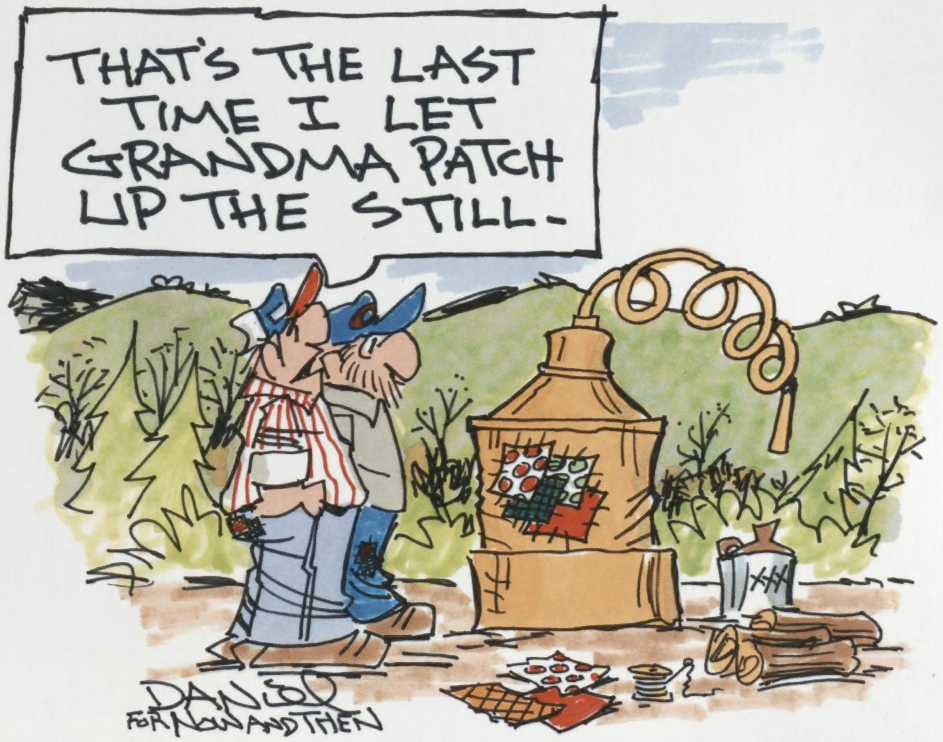

Cartoon courtesy Charles Daniel, *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

NOW & THEN

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